

Sri Sri Damodarastakam and Kartika-mahatmya

Introduction to Damodarastakam

tabe t̄ara diṣā sphure mo-nīcera hṛdaya
īṣvara tumi, ye karāha, sei siddha haya

“If You would please manifest Yourself within my heart and personally direct me in writing this book, then, although I am so mean, I may hope to be able to write it. You can do this because You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead Yourself, and whatever You direct is perfect.” (Cc Madhya, 24.327)

With these words Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī sought the blessings and the inspiration of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, complying with the Lord’s order to compose *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*¹. Despite the existence of other smṛti-śāstras such as Manu-smṛti, Yajñavalkya-smṛti, and so on, a specific *Vaiṣṇava-smṛti* was wanting². Therefore the Lord asked Sanātana:

vṛndāvane kṛṣṇa-sevā, vaiṣṇava-ācāra
bhakti-smṛti-śāstra kari kariha pracāra

“Establish devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī in Vṛndāvana. You should also compile bhakti scripture and preach the bhakti cult from Vṛndāvana.” (Cc Madhya 23.104)

Conforming to the Lord’s order, Sanātana Gosvāmī, assisted by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, wrote *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, which contains instructions on routine activities, descriptions of rituals and festivities, scriptural evidences for theological and philosophical *Vaiṣṇava* tenets, and much more. The book is filled with authoritative quotations from hundreds of scriptures.

Some of its chapters describe the various lunar months, including a calendar of the various festivities and ceremonies, and one full chapter, the sixteenth, is devoted to the month of Kārtika, which is particularly dear to the Lord and to His devotees.

The present book is an attempt to concisely render this chapter in English language. It is arranged in two parts: the first is a detailed translation of the *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* verses accompanied by the respective commentary, and the second is a digest of the whole chapter, which unfolds in three subdivisions, namely Cogency of Kārtika vratas, Greatness of Kārtika, and Kārtika duties.

Although there are already some English versions of *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* available, the necessity of a new translation was dictated by the presence of the commentary which accompanies it. The commentary, in fact, gives shades of meanings which were not referred to in previous translations, and in order to give full justice and maximum clarity to the commentary I was forced to translate the verses afresh; the same is true for the Bhāgavatam verses quoted by the author in his commentary. In Sanskrit poetry, words have the power to express several different meanings, just like the sound of a bell (*dhvani*) reverberates and expands in many echoing waves. Therefore I certainly do not intend to undermine other translations and I plead those readers who are accustomed to read them regularly to bear with me. The work of those translators was certainly encomiable and it would be foolish not to acknowledge its value, nevertheless I believe it does not fully represent the original. Perhaps to respect it more than the original may even culminate in a sin of false piety. *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* is quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* as an extract from *Padma Purāṇa*³, where it is ascribed to Sage Satyavrata.⁴ Sanātana Gosvāmī introduces it, with these verses from *Padma Purāṇa*, as part of the worship to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, the presiding Deities of the month,:

tatah priyatamā viṣṇo rādhikā gopikāsu ca
kartike pūjanīyā ca śrī-dāmodara-sannidhau

“Śrī Rādhikā is Lord Hari’s favorite among the Gopīs. Therefore during Kārtika She should be worshipped, next to Śrī-Dāmodara.”

dvijaṃ dāmodaraṃ kṛtvā tat-patnīm rādhikāṃ tathā
kārtike pūjanīyau tau vāso’laṅkāra-bhojanaiḥ.
rādhikā-pratimāṃ viprāḥ pūjayet kārtike tu yaḥ
tasya tuṣyati tat-prītyai śrīmān dāmodaro hariḥ.

“During Kārtika, one should worship a *brāhmaṇa* as Śrī Dāmodara and his wife as Śrī Rādhā, offering them garments, ornaments and eatables. O *brāhmaṇas!* Śrī Dāmodara, Lord Hari, is very pleased with the devotee who seeks Śrī Rādhikā’s satisfaction by worshipping her *mūrti* during the month of Kārtika.”

*dāmodarāṣṭakam nāma stotraṁ dāmodarārcanam
nityam dāmodarākāraṣi paṭhet satyavratoditam.*

“One should recite regularly the hymn sung by Satyavrata Ṛṣi called Dāmodarāṣṭaka, because this worship attracts Śrī Dāmodara.” (HBV 16.195-198)

Sanātana Gosvāmī himself compiled a commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* called *Dig-darśinī-ṭikā*. *Dig-darśinī* means «which gives the orientation» and *ṭikā* means commentary. In Sanskrit literature it is quite common to find an author commenting on his own work, so the reader ought not to be surprised.

The commentary is enriched by frequent citations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Sanātana Gosvāmī is renowned as a true *rasika* and a great expert in the subtle meanings of Śrīla Vyāsadeva's masterpiece. His elucidations emphasize the proper attitude in praying to the Lord, display the true teaching behind the Lord's *līlā*, and disclose some hidden truths about *Vraja-bhakti*⁵.

I chose to add to the translation of the commentary its transliteration. I'm a Sanskrit lover and I felt it my duty to encourage the reader to learn more about this extraordinary language. I also did it for the benefit of scholarly readers who may like to verify the translation with the original.

As for the second part, I did not include Devanāgarī script and transliteration of the verses to keep the size of the book within reasonable limits. I tried to clarify obscure topics with extensive footnotes, many of which are extracts from *Dig-darśinī-ṭikā*.

At first I thought of retaining the Sanskrit for technical words such as *bhakti*, *prema*, *bhāva*, etc., which are widely employed in the text and in the commentary. Later on I tried to smoothen the prose by using English equivalents. In the last drafts, however, I opted for a compromise between the two approaches.

For example I believe that «devotion» does not convey the full meaning of *bhakti*, which is a much more dynamic concept⁶. Similarly, «loving devotion» is not fully satisfactory as an equivalent for *prema*, especially due to the implications of the word «love» in the present use. Again, neither «feeling» nor «sentiment» do cover the full import of *bhāva* in the context of *bhakti*. The word «pathos» may be more accurate, due to the specific usage in the field of aesthetics, but it is not very intelligible for the occasional reader, and its connotations are somewhat misleading when superimposed on Indian aesthetics.

A more exhaustive analysis of these and other words would be necessary to give the original work full justice, were it not for the fear of trespassing the borders of this book. After all, this had always been a dilemma – any work of translation is bound to incompleteness — and I am aware of being distant from a final solution. The core of the problem lies in the difference in culture, habits and language. These incompatibilities are even more marked between ancient and modern civilizations, owing to the lapse of time. Moreover, philosophical works are particularly liable to translation incongruities⁷. As for philosophical conclusions, Sanātana Gosvāmī's work is surely flawless, having been written with accomplished scholarship and full realization. In the event of discrepancies I claim full responsibility, hope for the clemency of the reader, and beg the author for forgiveness.

Śrī-Dāmodarāṣṭakam
(From *Padma Purāna*)

with the *Dig-darśinī-ṭikā* by Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī

Devanagari text, transliteration, word for word synonyms, translation, commentary and commentary's transliteration

Introduction

The eight verses called *Dāmodarāṣṭaka*, which are widely read, recited and sung every autumn during the month of *Kārtika*, are already familiar to most Vaiṣṇavas. To many, however, these *śloka*s may appear somewhat mysterious, and reciting them may become just an empty ritual, mostly due to the language barrier.

There are already some English versions of *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* available, all having their virtues and their reason to exist. Nonetheless I deemed those versions defective in some respects, thus I felt an original work deserved to be presented. *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* is an extract from *Padma Purāna*, one of the six *sattvika Purāna*s,¹ although I could not trace it in the present editions at my disposal, namely Gita Press's and Nag Publishers'. The reasons for this discrepancy may be several, but to analyze them evades the purpose of the present booklet. Let's take notice, however, that there are at least three different variants of *Padma Purāna*i, and I could not consult all of them.

Anyhow, the eight verses were certainly present in the version consulted by the author of *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. They are ascribed to Satyavrata Muni, and are composed in *Bhujāṅga-prayāta* metre, which has twelve syllables in each quatrainⁱⁱ. The injunction for their daily recitation during the month of *Kārtika*, which is originally found in *Padma Purāna*, is corroborated in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, the work attributed to Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī.^{iv} *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* is called *Vaiṣṇava-smṛti*, the devotional law-book. It contains instructions on routine activities, descriptions of rituals and festivities, scriptural evidences for theological and philosophical *Vaiṣṇava* tenets, and much more. The book is filled with authoritative quotations from hundreds of scriptures.

Some of its chapters describe the various lunar months, including a calendar of the various festivities and ceremonies. In the section dealing with the month of *Kārtika* the *Dāmodarāṣṭaka* prayers are introduced as follows:

*tataḥ priyatamā viṣṇo rādhikā gopikāsu ca
kartike pūjanīyā ca śrī-dāmodara-sannidhau*

Śrī Rādhikā is Lord Hari's favorite among the Gopīs. Therefore during *Kārtika* She should be worshipped, next to Śrī-Dāmodara.

*dviyaṁ dāmodaram kṛtvā tat-patnīm rādhikāṁ tathā
kārtike pūjanīyau tau vāso'laṅkāra-bhojanaiḥ.
rādhikā-pratimāṁ viprāḥ pūjayet kārtike tu yaḥ
tasya tuṣyati tat-prītyai śrīmān dāmodaro hariḥ.*

During *Kārtika*, one should worship a *brāhmaṇa* as Śrī Dāmodara and his wife as Śrī Rādhā, offering them garments, ornaments and eatables.

O *brāhmaṇas*! Śrī Dāmodara, Lord Hari, is very pleased with the devotee who seeks Śrī Rādhikā's satisfaction by worshipping her mūrti during the month of *Kārtika*.”

*dāmodarāṣṭakam nāma stotraṁ dāmodarārcanam
nityaṁ dāmodarākārṣi paṭhet satyavratoditam.*

One should recite regularly the hymn sung by Satyavrata Rṣiv called *Dāmodarāṣṭaka*, because this worship attracts Śrī Dāmodara.

Sānātana Gosvāmī himself compiled the *Dig-darśinī-ṭīkā* on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. *Dig-darśinī* means “which gives the orientation” and *ṭīkā* means commentary. In Sanskrit literature it is quite common to find an author commenting on his own work, so the reader ought not be surprised by this.

The commentary is enriched by frequent citations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Sānātana Gosvāmī is renowned as a true *rasika* and a great expert in the subtle meanings of Śrīla Vyāsadeva's masterpiece. His elucidations emphasize the proper attitude in praying to the Lord, display the true teaching behind the Lord's *līlā*, and disclose some hidden truths about *Vraja-bhakti*.

I have not annexed any personal comments to the translation, except where absolutely necessary for the sake of clarity. At places I appended footnotes, from which interested readers may benefit.

I chose to add to the translation of the commentary its transliteration. I'm a Sanskrit lover and I felt it my duty to encourage the reader to learn more about this extraordinary language. I also did it for the benefit of scholarly readers who will like to verify the translation with the original.

The quotations within the commentary are exclusively from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; all references in parentheses indicate the number of Canto, chapter and text, respectively.

At first I thought of retaining the Sanskrit for technical words such as *bhakti*, *prema*, *bhāva*, etc., widely employed in the text and in the commentary. Later on, however, I changed my mind, hoping to enhance readability by using English equivalents, although I am fully aware of the limitations of such renderings. The last drafts were a compromise of this two approaches.

The reader should be aware, for example, that “devotion” does not convey the full meaning of *bhakti*, which is a much more dynamic concept. Similarly, “loving devotion” is not fully satisfactory as an equivalent for *prema*, especially because of the impact the word “love” has on the modern mind. Again, neither “feeling” nor “sentiment” do cover the full import of *bhāva* in the context of *bhakti*. The word “pathos” may be more accurate, due to the specific usage in the field of aesthetics, but it is not as intelligible for the occasional reader, and its connotations are somewhat misleading when superimposed on Indian aesthetics.

A more exhaustive analysis of these and other words would be necessary to give the original work full justice, but it eludes the purpose of this booklet. After all, this had always been a dilemma – any work of translation is bound to incompleteness^{viii} — and I am aware of being distant from a final solution. The core of the problem lies in the difference in culture, habits and language. These incompatibilities are even more marked between ancient and modern civilizations, owing to the lapse of time. Moreover, philosophical works are particularly liable to incongruities.^{ix}

Sānātana Gosvāmī's work is flawless, being written with accomplished scholarship and full realization. I am fully responsible for whatever imperfections have crept in the translation due to my incapacity or lack of spiritual understanding. I hope for the clemency of the reader and I beg the author for forgiveness.

Text One

*namāmiśvaram sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ
lasat-kundalaṁ gokule bhrājamānaṁ
yaśodā-bhiyolūkkhalād dhāvamānaṁ
parāṁṣṭam atyantato-drutya gopyā*

namāmi— I bow down; *īśvaram* — to the Supreme Lord; *sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ* — Who is the embodiment of eternity,

sentience and bliss; *lasat-kundalam* — with swinging earrings; *gokule* — in Gokula; *bhrājamānam* — Who shines; *yaśodā-bhiyā*— in fear of Yaśodā; *ulūkhalād* — from the mortar; *dhāvamānam* — running away; *para-amṛṣtam* — was caught from behind; *atyantataḥ-drutya* — running faster; *gopyā* — by the gopī.

“I bow down to the Supreme Lord, Who ever shines in Gokula. He is compact sentience, eternity, and bliss, in constitution. His earrings were dancing on His cheeks as He ran from the mortar in fear of mother Yaśodā, who eventually caught Him in the chase that followed.”

Dig-darsinī-tīkā

I bow down to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Dāmodara, and to Śrī Rādhā. In this commentary I shall disclose the purport of Śrī *Dāmodarāṣṭaka*.

Before describing the essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s divinity in the distinctive character, form, activities, and qualities of is Gokula manifestation, Satyavrata Ṛṣi devotionally bows down to the Lord in prelude to his prayers –*namāmiśvaram sac-cid-ānanda-rūpam*. He humbly begins by paying his respects to invoke auspiciousness, as per the rules.

To whom does he offer respects? To *Īśvara*, the Supreme Lord. The intended import of the word *īśvara* is, electively, “the owner of every energy,” “the undisputed Lord of the universe,” or simply “my Lord.” These three meanings respectively imply glorification, prayer to the Supreme, and exclusive *bhakti*.

What is the nature of the Supreme Lord?

śrī-rādhā-sahitaṁ natvā śrī-dāmodaram īśvaram, dāmodarāṣṭaka-vyākhyā-dig eṣā darśyate ‘dhunā. tatrāgre kim api prārthayitum ādau tasya tattva-rūpa-līlā-guṇādi-viśeṣam gokula-prakaṭita-nija-bhagavatta-sāra-sarvasva-bhūtam varṇayan bhaktyādau namas-karoti namāmiti. tac ca maṅgalārtham sarva-karmasu prāg eva dāsyā-viśeṣeṇa vidhanād ādau nirḍiṣtam. kam? īśvaram sarva-śaktimantaṁ jagad-eka-nāthaṁ nija-prabhuṁ vā. tatrādyah pakṣaḥ stutyādi-śakty-arthah, dvitīyah parama-vandyatārthah, antyaś ca bhakti-viśeṣeṇeti dik. katham-bhūtam?

Concentrated bliss, sentience, and eternity are the ingredients of His constitution. This characteristic proves the Lord supreme position.^{xi}

Next, Satyavrata establishes the Lord’s supreme position by portraying His extraordinary charm –*lasat-kundalam*.

His earrings, engaged with Him in eternal childhood pastimes, endlessly play on His cheeks when He flees from his mother, Yaśodā. This image captures His splendid visage.

Moreover, the Lord’s relation to every ornament is evoked by the exclusive fortune of these two earrings, who are chosen to kiss His cheeks. Thus another meaning is, “His earrings shine because of His beauty,” which refers to His body’s peculiarity of beautifying even jewels. The *Gopīs* declare in the Tenth Canto (10.29.40): “Birds, cows, trees, and deer are all thrilled when looking at this form, which blesses the three worlds.”

sac-cid-ānanda-rūpam sac-cid-ānanda-ghana-vigraham ity arthah, iti tattva-viśeṣeṇotkarṣa-viśeṣa uktaḥ. saundarya-viśeṣeṇotkarṣa-viśeṣam āha, lasantī śrī-yaśodābhiyā dhāvamānāt satata-bālyā-kriḍā-viśeṣa-paratvād nirantaram lolatayā gaṇḍayoḥ kṛḍantī kundale yasya tam; iti śrī-mukhe śobha-viśeṣa uktaḥ. yad vā, śrī-gaṇḍa-cumbana-saubhagyataḥ kundalayoḥ sarva-vibhūṣaṇeṣu mukhyatvāt tābhyām tāni sarvaṇy evopalakṣyante. tatas ca lasantī śobhamāne kundale yasmāt taṁ bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇāṅgam ity arthah. ataevoktaṁ śrī-gopībhir daśama-skandhe, “trailokya-saubhagam idaṁ ca nirṅkṣya rūpam, yad go-dviija-druma-mṛgāḥ pulakāny avibhran” iti,

And Uddhava states in the Third Canto (3.2.12): “The Lord is spellbound by the splendor of His own body, which is the ornament of all ornaments.”

Then he proves the Lord’s supreme position through the exceptional qualities of His associates –*gokule bhrājamānam*.

“He shines in Gokula, the land of the *gopīs*, the *gopas*, the cows, and the calves.”

By using the verb “shines” Satyavrata Muni indicates that Śrī-Kṛṣṇa further enhances the already wonderful land of Gokula with His presence. Or, he just hints to the natural beauty of the place, where the Lord appears splendid. It is said in the Tenth Canto (10.32.14): ...surrounded by *Gopīs* worshipping Him, He displayed all the beauty stored in the three worlds.

He further promotes the Lord’s supreme position by sketching one of His exquisite pastimes in the second line of the stanza – *Yaśodā-bhiyolūkhalād*-

“vismāpanam svasya ca saubhagardheḥ, param padaṁ bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇāṅgam” iti. parivāra-viśeṣeṇotkarṣa-viśeṣam āha, gokule gopa-gopī-go-vatsādi-nivāse bhrājamānam, yogya-sthāna- viśeṣe pūrvato’ py utkarṣa-viśeṣa-prakatanena gokulasya svābhāvika-śobhā-viśeṣeṇa vā śobhamānam. tac ca śrī-daśama-skandhādu, “cakāsa gopī-pariṣad-gato’rcitas, trailokya-lakṣmy-ekapadaṁ vapur dadhat” ity ādinoktam. Līlā-viśeṣeṇotkarṣa-viśeṣam āha, yaśam deti sārhdhena.

dhāvamānam parāmṛṣtam atyantato-drutya gopyā. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, standing on top of a grinding mortar, was snatching yogurt from a hanging jar.^{xii} Seeing His mother coming, He climbed down the mortar and ran in fear of punishment for the mischief of breaking the earthenware.

The Ninth Chapter of Tenth Canto is devoted to the detailed narration of this incident (10.9.8,9):

She cautiously approached Her son, Who was standing on the upside-down mortar. Furtively glancing around, He was feeding yogurt to a monkey from an hanging pot.

Seeing His mother coming towards Him with a stick, He immediately climbed down the mortar and fled as if in fear, but she pursued Him, that same Lord Who cannot be captured even in the unflinching meditation of greatyogis. In the words *atyantato drutyā*, the suffix ‘*yap*’ is

yaśoḍāyā mātuḥ sakāśād bhiyā dadhi-bhāṇḍa-bhedanādy-aparādha-kṛta-bhītyā udūkhalāt śik-sthita-navanīta-cauryārtham udvartya tale samārūdhād udūkhalataḥ dhāvamānatvayāpasarantam. Ata ca viśeṣāpeksakair daśama-skandha-navamādhyāyoktam, “udūkhalānḡhrer upari vyavasthītam / markāya kāmam dadatam śici sthītam / haiyaṅgavaṁ caurya-viśaṅkitekṣaṇam / nirīkṣya paścāt sutam āgamac chanaīḥ;” tām ātta-yaṣṭim prasamīkṣya satvaras / tato’ varuhyāpasasāra bhītavat / gopyanvadhāvan na yam api yoginām / kṣamam praveṣṭum tapaseritam manah” ity ādy anusandheyam. tataś ca atyantato-drutyā vegena

used with the root *dru* because the word *atyantatas* is compounded with *itxiii*. Yaśodā could run faster, thus she soon caught Him from behind. The words “running fast” educe the special charm of her broad hips and breasts, as well as her intense affection.

The word *gopyā* reminds that this rare fortune belongs to the cowherd-people only and owes to the expression of their love.

The words “she caught Him from behind” also hint to His special affection for her. It is said in *Bhāgavatam* (10.9.10): Although hampered by her broad hips, the graceful mother ran after Him; and flowers dropping from her loosened hair followed her path. Finally, she caught Him from behind.

dhāvitvā samāsaikapadyena yab-ādeśaḥ, gopyā śrī-yaśodayā parā. āmṛṣṭam pṛṣṭato dhṛtam, atra ca atyantato-drutyety anena śrī-yaśoḍāyā api stana-nitamba-gauravādi-saundaryya-viśeṣaḥ sneha-viśeṣas ca sūcitah. gopyeti premokti-pari-pātyā gopa-jātīnām eva tādr̥ṣam mahāsaubhāgyam iti dhvanitam. parāmṛṣṭam ity anena tasyām bhāgavataḥ sneha-viśeṣo dhvanita iti dik. atra ca, “anvañcamānā janani brhac-calac-chronī-bharākrānta-gatiḥ sumadhyamā / javena visraṁsita-keṣa-bandhana-cyuta-prasūnānugatiḥ parāmṛṣat” ity artho’ nusandheyah

Text 2

*rudantam muhur netra-yugmam mrjantam
karāmbhoja-yugmena sātaṅka-netram
muhuh śvāsa-kampa-tri-rekhāṅka-kaṅṭha-
sthita-graiva-dāmodaram bhakti-baddham*

rudantam — weeping; *muhuh* — again and again; *netra-yugmam* — the two eyes; *mrjantam* — rubbing; *kara-ambhoja-yugmena* — with the two lotus hands; *sātaṅka-netram* — having frightened eyes; *muhuh* — again and again; *śvāsa* — due to rapid breathing; *kampa* — trembling; *tri-rekha-aṅka-kaṅṭha* — on the neck, marked with three lines like a conch; *sthita* — placed; *graiva* — necklace; *dāmodaram* — to Dāmodara; *bhakti-baddham* — Who is bound by bhakti.

“Having been caught, He was sobbing and rubbing His frightened eyes with His lotus hands. His gasps were shaking the ornaments on His neck, which is marked with three lines like a conch.”xiv I bow down to Śrī-Dāmodara, Who can be tied only by bhakti.”

Dig-darsinī-ṭikā

Now Satyavrata Muni refers to the sequel of the pastime, with the words –*rudantam*... etc.

This is the description given in *Bhāgavatam*(10.9.11):

Yaśodā reprehended Kṛṣṇa, holding His arm. Weeping and glancing at her in fear, He was rubbing His eyes and thus spreading the black *kajjal*xv on His face.

Seeing the stick in His mother hand He was trying to avoid the impending punishment by weeping and by rubbing His eyes with innocent spontaneity.

Alternatively, with His hands He was wiping the tears suddenly provoked by fear, or He was trying to check the flow of tears.

The words *sātaṅka-netram* suggest that if His eyes were frightened, His mind was ever more so, or, just that a cowed expression was in His eyes.

tad-anantara-līlā-viśeṣam vadan, “kṛtāgasam tam prarudantam akṣiṇī / kaśantam añjan- maṣiṇī sva-pāninā / udvikṣamāṇam bhaya-vihvalekṣaṇam haste/ grhitvā bhīṣayanty avāgurat” ity artham āha, rudantam iti. māṭṭi-haste ṣaṣṭim dṛṣtvā tayā tādanam āśaṅkhyā bhītatvādi pradarśanena tat-pariharaṇāya krandantam, ata eva karāmbhoja-yugmenanetra-yugmam mrjantam yugapan mṛjayantam, etac ca bālya-līlā-viśeṣa-svabhavataḥ. yad vā, bhayāveśena sadyo’ nugacchato’ śruṇo niṣkasanārtham, yad vā, āsru-dhārāpasaraṇārtham iti dik. yataḥ sātaṅke saśaṅke netre api, kiṁ punar mano yasya tam. yad vā, sa-bhaya-nirīkṣaṇa-netra-yugmam ity arthaḥ.

In either case the Lord was showing fear, trying to escape a likely spanking. Moreover, His sobbing shook the ornaments such as the string of pearls on His smooth neck which, is marked with three lines like a conch.

Dāmodara means “having a rope on the abdomen,” as described in *Bhāgavatam* (10.9.14), “Then she bound Him with a rope to the mortar, as if He were an ordinary child.”

The rope mutually tied his belly and the mortar. This incident again emphasizes Śrī-Kṛṣṇa’s supreme position, but from the perspective of His peculiar dependence on His devotee: being the recipient of His mother’s love, or due to His affection for His mother, He was compelled to let her tie Him up. It wasn’t because of the ropes’s strength: in fact, no matter how many ropes she would join, they were always short by two inches.

tataś ca tādana-parihāraṅārtham idam api lilāntaram uhyam. kiñ ca, muhuḥ svāsena rodanāveśa-kṛtena kampam kampamānam, tri-rekhānke kambuvad-rekhā-traya-cihne kañṭhe sthitam graivam graiveyakam sarva-grivābhūṣanam muktāhārādī yasya. dāma udare yasya, anena ca “gopikolukhale dāmnā babandha prakṛta yathā” ity uktam. dāmnodare ulūkhale cobhayato bandhanam uktam, tad evābhivyāñjayan bhakta-vaśyatā-viśeṣenotkarṣa-viśeṣam āha, bhaktyaiva mātuḥ sva-viṣayakayā tasya vā mātr-viṣayakayā baddham svīkṛta-bandhanam, na tu pāśa-varga-balāt, sarvataḥ samuccitair apy anantaiḥ pāśair nyūna-dvy-aṅgulāpūraṅāt.

As the *Bhāgavatam* says (10.9.15-17), “While tying her mischievous son she found that the rope was short by two inches, and she looked for another one.

Realizing that this also was too short, she brought more ropes, but still the ropes were two inches too short to make a knot. In this way she collected all the ropes available at home....”

Alternatively, the Lord wants to teach that only devotion can conquer Him. This meaning, however, culminates in the previous one (He was bound by His mother’s devotion and not by ropes).

The narration continues as follows (10.9.18-21):

“His mother was wet with perspiration and her flower fillet slackened. Seeing her so exerted, He mercifully agreed to be bound. O king Parikṣit! Being the Supreme Controller, Śrī-Kṛṣṇa is absolutely independent, but here His dependence on His devotee was disclosed.

tac cōktam – “tad dāma badhyamānasya /svārbhakasya kṛtāgasah / dvy-aṅgulonam abhūt tena / sandadhe’ nyac ca gopikā; yad āsīt tad api nyūnam / tenānyad api sandadhe / tad api dvy-aṅgulam nyūnam yad yad ādatta bandhanam; evam sva-geha-dāmāni / yaśodā sandadhate api” ity ādi. yad vā, dāmodaratve hetuḥ – bhaktyaiva baddham vaśi-kṛtam, tathāpi sa evārthah paryavasyati. kiñ ca–“sva-mātuḥ svinna-gātrāyā / visrata-kavara-srajah / drṣtvā pariśramam kṛṣṇah / kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane; evam sandarśitā hy aṅga / hariṇā bhakta-vaśyatāxvi / sva-vaśenāpi kṛṣṇena/ yasyedam seśvaram vaśe;

Brahmā, Śaṅkara, and even Lakṣmī, who resides on

the chest of the Lord, cannot win the mercy that Yaśodā got from Kṛṣṇa, the grantor of liberation.

Even ascetics, scholars, and yogīs cannot reach Śrī-Kṛṣṇa, the Son of Yaśodā, as easily as the devotees.”

Furthermore (10.10.25), (The Lord thought) “Śrī-Nārada is My dear devotee. I shall grant to these two sons of Kuvera whatever he promised them^{xvii}.”

Hence Nārada’s devotion for the Lord is the true cause behind the pastime of uprooting the *Yamalārjuna* trees.

nemaṁ viriñcō’na bhavo / na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁsrayā, prasādam lebhire gopī yat tat prāpa vimukti-dāt; nāyam sukhāpo bhagavān / dehinām gopikā-sutaḥ / jñāninān cātma-bhūtānām / yathā bhaktimatām iha” iti eśam arthah, tathā, “devarṣir me priyatamo / yad imau dhanadātma-jau / tat tathā sādhaiṣyāmi / yad-gītam tan mahātmanā” ity āder artho’ pi śrī-nārada-bhakti-apekṣayā yamalārjunādi-tat-tal-lilā-rūpo’ nena sūcitah.

Text 3

*itīdr̥k-sva-lilābhir ānanda-kuṇḍe
sva-ghoṣam nimajjantam ākhyāpayantam
tadiyeśita-jñeṣu bhaktair jitatvam
punaḥ prematas tam satāvṛtti vande.*

iti — thus; *īdr̥k-sva-lilābhiḥ* — by such activities; *ānanda-kuṇḍe* — in a lake of bliss; *sva-ghoṣam* — His village; *nimajjantam* — submerging; *ākhyāpayantam* — disclosing; *tadiya-īśita-jñeṣu* — to those aware of His glories; *bhaktaiḥ jitatvam* — Who is conquered by the devotees; *punaḥ* — again; *premataḥ* — out of affection; *tam* — to Him; *śata-āvṛtti* — hundred of times; *vande* — I chant His glories.

By such pastimes He flooded Gokula in a lake of bliss, and He revealed to those in awe for His majesty that devotees can conquer Him. Out of love, I chant His glories hundreds of times.

Dig-darsinī-tīkā

Now Satyavrata Muni glorifies the Lord's supreme position through His unique attributes^{xviii} — *itīdrk-sva-līlābhīr...* The conjunction *itī* means “in this way”. It relates the present verse to the Lord's dependence on His devotee, mentioned in the previous verse. Therefore the import is that by showing such dependence from His devotee He flooded Gokula in a lake of bliss.

Alternatively, *itī* relates this verse to the pastime of being bound with a rope; then the meaning would be, “by such charming infancy pastimes he flooded Gokula in a lake of bliss.” This is described in *Bhāgavatam* as follows (10.11.7,8), “Sometimes the Lord, incited by the *gopīs*, would sing loudly and dance at their will like a wooden puppet. Sometimes He would try to carry a wooden seat, wooden sandals, or another weight, (as a test of strength) and (when unable to accomplish the task) He would toss His arms in defeat, at the delight of His kinfolk.”

guna-viśeṣeṇotkarṣa-viśeṣam āha – itīti. evaṁ bhakta-vaśyatayā, yad vā ity anayā dāmodara-līlayā idrīṣibhiḥ ca dāmodara-līlā-sadrīṣibhiḥ parama-manoharābhiḥ śaiśavibhiḥ svasya svābhir vā asādhāraṇibhiḥ līlābhiḥ krīḍābhiḥ. 'gopībhiḥ stobhito' nṛtyad / bhagavān bālavat kvacit / udgāyati kvacin muḡdhas tad-vaśo dāru-yantravat; bibharti kvacid ājñaptaḥ / pīṭhakonmāna-pādukam, bāhu-kṣepaṇ ca kurute svānām pṛītiṁ samudvahat' ity ādy

With such activities He was submerging the residents of Gokula in a deep lake of blissful emotions, as indicated by the words “at the delight of His kinfolk.”

Alternatively, *ghoṣa* may also mean “fame” or “proclaiming the glory”. He would Himself plunge in a lake of ecstasy, experiencing the highest bliss upon hearing the glories of His people, the *gopīs*, the *gopas* etc.

By enacting such pastimes, Śrī-Kṛṣṇa also revealed His dependence on His devotees, to scholars who are absorbed in studying His majestic aspects^{xix}: “Behold! I'm captivated by the devotees, not by those who pursue the path of knowledge.”^{xx} As shown in *Bhāgavatam* (10.11.9), “The Lord displayed to the savants of this world His submission to His devotee.”

uktābhiḥ sva-ghoṣam nija-gokula-vāsi-prāni-jātam sarvam eva ānanda-kuṇḍe ānanda-rasa-maya-gabhīra-jalāsaya-viśeṣe nitaram majjantam majjayantam etad evoktam 'svānām pṛītiṁ samudvahed' iti. yad vā, ghoṣaḥ kīrtir māhatmyotkīrtanam vā, svasya svānām vā gopa-gopy-ādīnām ghoṣo yathā syāt tathā svayam eva ānanda-kuṇḍe nimajjantam parama-sukha-viśeṣam anubhavantam ity arthaḥ. kiñ ca, tābhir eva tadīyeṣita-jñeṣu bhagavad-aīśvarya-jñāna-pareṣu bhaktair jitatvam ātmano bhakta-vaśyatām ākhyāpayantam; bhakti-parāṇām eva vaśyo' haṁ, na tu jñāna-parāṇām iti prathayantam. anena ca, 'darśayaṁs tad-vidām loke / ātmano bhakta-vaśyatām' ity asya artho darśitaḥ.

He opened this secret to scholars absorbed in studying His godly features; alternatively, He disclosed it to scholars who know well the influence of the Lord's associates (on Him), and not to others, because the esoteric *bhakti* and its glories are not to be revealed to sophists who pursue mere erudition and who are ignorant of the devotees' greatness. Thus in the cited verse (10.11.9) the words *tad-vidām* refer to those who are aware of the Lord's bond of affection with His servants. Satyavrata, then, feels like lauding the Lord unendingly, out of love; this glorification should be interpreted as a spontaneous appreciation, imbued of exclusive devotion: it is not just awe for the Lord's majestic features.

tasyārthaḥ, tam bhagavantam vidantīti tathā teṣāṁ taj-jñāna-parāṇām ity arthaḥ. tān prati darśayann iti. yad vā, tadīyānām bhāgavatānām prabhāvābhijñeṣu eva, na ca anyeṣu ākhyāpayantam, vaiṣṇava-māhātmya-viśeṣānabhijñeṣu kevala-jñāna-pareṣu bhakter viśeṣatas tan-māhātmyasya ca parama-gopyatvena prakāśanāyogyatvāt. evaṁ ca 'tad-vidām' iti bhṛtya-vaśyatā-vidām ity artho draṣṭavyaḥ. ataḥ premataḥ bhakti-viśeṣeṇa śatāvṛtti yathāsyāt tathā śata-śata-vārān tam īśvaram punar vande. ato bhaktānām avāśya-kṛtyam bhakti-prakāra-viśeṣa-rūpaṁ vandanam eva mama prārthyaḥ, na tv aīśvarya-jñānādīti bhāvāḥ.

Text 4

*varam deva mokṣam na mokṣāvadhim vā
na cānyam vṛṇe' haṁ vareśād apīha
idam te vapur nātha gopāla-bālam
sadā me manasy āvirāstām kim anyaiḥ*

varam — boon; *deva* — O divine Lord; *mokṣam* — liberation; *na* — not; *mokṣa-avadhim* — the highest level of liberation; *vā* — or; *na ca* — nor; *anyam* — other; *vṛṇe* — chose; *aham* — I; *vara-īśād* — from You, the grantor of any possible boon; *apī* — even; *iha* — here; *idam* — this; *te* — your; *vapur* — form; *nātha* — O Lord; *gopāla-bālam* — as a cowherd child; *sadā* — always; *me* — my; *manasi* — in the mind; *āvirāstām* — may enter; *kim* — of what avail; *anyaiḥ* — other (boons).

“O divine Lord! Although You are competent to grant any boon, now I don't cherish liberation, nor life in *Vaikuṇṭha*, nor any other privilege. O Lord! Be always present in my mind as *Bāla-gopāla* in *Vṛndāvana*. What will then be the value of any other blessing?”

Dig-darsinī-tīkā

After glorifying the Lord's supreme position, Satyavrata Rṣi formulates his prayer in two verses, beginning with –*varam deva mokṣam na mokṣāvadhiṃ vā na cānya vṛṇe 'ham varesād aṣiḥa*.

The import of the direct address *deva* is “O Supremely Brilliant,” or “O hero of sweet pastimes.”

“Although You could grant any boon, I'm not entertaining the fourth goal of human life, liberation,xxi even in its topmost expressionxxii—a place in the spiritual world, where the ultimate happiness is experienced—and I'm not hankering for other (*anya*) achievements such as the nine-fold practice of *bhakti*.”

Alternatively, the word *anya* indicates “that which is desirable by others,” or whatever else could be coveted here (*iḥa*) in Vṛndāvana.

The word *iḥa* is related to the second half of the stanza too.

The intention is to show the comparative value of

evam utkarṣa-viśeṣa-varṇanena stutvā prarthayate – varam iti dvābhyām. deva, he parama-dyotamāna! he madhura-kṛīḍā-viśeṣa-pareti vā. varesād sakala-vara-pradāna-samarthād aṣi tvattaḥ mokṣam caturtha- puruṣārtham mokṣasyāvadhim vā parama-kāṣṭhā-rūpam ghana-sukha-viśeṣātmakam śrī-vaikuṅṭha-lokam, anyāṅ ca śravaṇādi-bhakti-prakāram aham varam prārthyaṃ, yad vā, anyair varāṅyam aṣi, yad vā, varatayā iḥa vṛndāvane na vṛṇe. iḥety asya pareṇāpi sambandhaḥ,

the three mentioned goals: eternal life in the spiritual planets is superior to liberation, as expounded in *Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam*, second part;xxiii the nine-fold *bhakti*, *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, and so on, is in turn a higher achievement than the spiritual realm. Statements such as (3.15.49), “let us take birth even in infernal formsxxiv (provided we remember Your lotus feet),” prove that the absorption in *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, etc., is more desirable than life in Vaikuṅṭha, because the spiritual world is everywhere when such absorption is present.

Śrī-Kṛṣṇa may ask, ‘Then which boon do you chose?’

He replies—*idaṅ te vapur nātha gopāla-bālam sadā me manasy āvīrāstām*.

“O Lord! Please, enter my mind forever with the Bala-gopāla form of these Vṛndāvana pastimes. Although You are already present in my heart as the Supersoul, let Your form be manifested in my meditation in its full-fledged beauty.”

atra ca mokṣādi-trayasya yathottara-śreṣṭhyam uhyam. tatra mokṣād vaikuṅṭha-lokasya śreṣṭhyam, śrī-bhāgavatāmṛtottara-khaṇḍe vyaktam evāsti. vaikuṅṭha-lokāt śravaṇādi-prakārasya ca śreṣṭhyam, “kāmaṅ bhavaḥ sva-vrjanair nirayeṣu naḥ syāt” ity ādi-vacanataḥ śravaṇādi-siddhyā narakādiṣv aṣi yatra tatra sarvatraiva vaikuṅṭha-vāsa-siddher iti dik. tarhi kim vṛṇuṣe? tadāha – he nātha! iḥa vṛndāvane idaṅ varṇitam gopāla-bāla-rūpam te vapuḥ sadā me manasy āvīrāstām. antaryāmitvādinā sthitam aṣi sākṣād iva sarvāṅga-saundaryādi-prakāsanena prakatam bhūyat.

The Lord may insist, “Liberation, residence in

Vaikuṅṭha, and nine-fold *bhakti* are also extremely useful, why don't you accept those, too?”

Hence he declares – *kim anyaiḥ*.

“What is the value of other boons? I do not need other privileges such as liberation. Your presence is the perfection and it implies every possible pleasure.xxv On the other hand, in this Bala-gopāla form You are so wonderful that to obtain something as insignificant as liberation without seeing You would just cause deep regret.”

Or, the Lord may say, “You are right, salvation should be rejected. Why then, don't you choose to see Me in one of My perfect four-handed figures? You could contemplate Me, converse with Me, and so forth.”

He replies, “What would then be the value of other blessings? I am entirely devoted to this splendid form, and I cannot relate to anything else.”

nanu mokṣādayo' pi paramopādeyās, tān aṣi vṛṇu, tatrāha – kim anyair iti. anyair mokṣādir māmā prayojanam nāstītyarthāḥ, tasya sarvānanda-kadambātmakatvāt tat-siddhyaiva sarva-siddheḥ. tathā tad-alābhe nijepsitāsiddhyāviśeṣetaṣ ca tuccha-lābhena śoka-viśeṣotpādanād anyair aṣi kim iti bhāvaḥ. yad vā, nanu mokṣādayo na vṛiyantām nāma, paramāpekṣyāṅi mādiya-śrī-catur-bhujādi-mūrti-darśana-sambhāṣaṇāḍiṅi vṛiyatām, tatrāha – kim anyair iti. citte tad etac chrimad-vapuḥ sadā sphurtāv eva māṅyanta-prītir nānyatreṅi bhāvaḥ.

The glories of contemplating the Lord within the

heart are described extensively by Sage Pippalāyana in the second part of the chapter called *Tapo-loka* of *Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam*.

The desire expressed in this verse is so sublime that it turns this prayer into a glorification. This applies to the next verses too.

antardarśana-māhātmyaṅ ca śrī-bhāgavatāmṛtottara-khaṇḍe tapo-loke śrī-pippalāyanena vivṛtyoktam aṣi. evam tasya prārthanāpi stutāv eva paryavasyati, tasyaiva sarvotrṣṭatvena prārthanāt, evam agre' pi.

Text 5

idaṅ te mukhāmbhojam atyanta-nīlair

*vṛtaṁ kuntalaiḥ snigdha-raktaiś ca gopyā
muhūś cumbitaṁ bimba-raktādharaṁ me
manasy āvirāstām alaṁ lakṣa-lābhaiḥ*

idam—this; *te*—your; *mukha-ambhojam*—lotus face; *atyanta-nīlaiḥ*—deep blue; *vṛtam*—encircled; *kuntalaiḥ*— by hair locks; *snigdha-raktaiḥ*—red-hued and glossy; *ca*—and; *gopyā*—by the *gopī* (Yaśodā); *muhūś*—again and again; *cumbitam*—kissed; *bimba-rakta-ādharam*—having lips red like a *bimba* fruit; *me*—my; *manasi*—in the mind; *āvirāstām*—may it enter; *alam*—no use of; *lakṣa-lābhaiḥ*—hundred thousands boons.

Your lotus face is framed in dark, crimson-hued curls, and decorated by lips as red as a *bimba* fruit. May this visage, kissed again and again by mother Yaśodā, always be manifested in my mind. Then to what avail will millions of boons be?”

Dig-darśinī-ṭīkā

Thinking “I am particularly eager to see Your enchanting face,” Satyavrata Muni keeps praying—*idam te*...etc. Although the beauty of his meditative vision is such that it cannot be phrased, he tries to indicate what he experienced with a metaphor, “Your countenance is a blooming lotus which extinguishes every affliction with the nectar of supreme bliss. May it be present in my mind, again and again. This fully blown lotus is encircled by your dark-blue, glossy, and red-hued curls, which are like bumble-bees humming around a corolla.”

The word *gopī* refers to Yaśodā or to Rādhā. The adverb *muhūś* is related to the past participle *cumbitam* and the verb *āvirāstām*.xxvi The meaning is, “May His lotus face, kissed again and again by Yaśodā, enter my mind again and again.”

tatra ca tava śrī-mukhaṁ parama-manoharaṁ viśeṣeṇa didṛkṣe, ity āha – idam iti. kadācid dhyāne’ nubhūyamānam anīrvacaniya-saundaryādikaṁ, tad eva nirdiśati – mukhaṁ evāmbhojam praphulla-kamalākaraṭvaṁ nikhila-santāpa-hāritva-paramānanda-rasavattvādinā, tan me manasi muhur avirāstām. katham bhūtam? atyanta-nīlaiḥ parama-śyāmalaiḥ snigdhaiś ca raktaiś ca kuntalaiḥ keśair alakair vā vṛtaṁ kamalaṁ bhramarair ivopari veṣṭitam. gopyā śrī-yaśodayā śrī-rādhayā vā cumbitaṁ, muhur ity asyātrāpi sambandhaḥ.

Alternatively, if we stick to the sequence of the

words, *muhūś* is in syntactical relation with *cumbitam* only; and the meaning is the following: “She is blessed with rare fortune, hence she can kiss Him again and again; may this lotus face enter my mind at least once.”

Or again, the word *sadā* could be dragged from the previous verse, reinforcing the sense in this way: “May this lotus face, kissed again and again (*muhūś*) by Yaśodā, always (*sadā*) enter in my mind.”

The compound *bimba-raktādharam*, “Having lips as red as a *bimba* fruit,” is used as an adjective for *mukhaṁ* (face). “Therefore hundred-thousands of other boons are just insignificant.” Here the word *lakṣa*, hundreds of thousands, denotes “every possible” and not a fixed number.

yad vā, pāṭha-kramād atraiva sambandhaḥ, tataś ca tayā mahā-dhanyayā muhūś cumbitaṁ api mama manasi sakṛd apy āvirāstām ity arthaḥ. yad vā, sadeti pūrva-gatasyātrāpy artha-balād anvaya eva syāt. bimbavad-raktaḥ adharau yasmin tat. tataś ca lakṣa-lābhaiḥ anyair lakṣa-sankhyair labdhair api prayojanaṁ nāstīty arthaḥ. nikhilārtham evaitat.

Text 6

*namo deva dāmodarānanta viṣṇo
prasīda prabho duḥkha-jālābdhi-magnam
kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyāti-dīnam batānu-
grhāṇeśa mām ajñam edhy akṣi-dṛśyaḥ*

namaḥ—I bow down to You; *deva*—O divine one; *dāmodara*—O Dāmodara; *ananta*—O unlimited one; *viṣṇo*—O omnipresent one; *prasīda*—be gracious; *prabho*—O omnipotent one; *duḥkha-jala-abdhi-magnam*—I am drowning in an ocean of sorrow; *kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyā*—with a shower of Your merciful glances; *ati-dīnam*—extremely miserable; *anugrḥāṇa*—bless me; *īśa*—O supremely independent; *mām*—me; *ajñam*—ignorant; *edhy*—appear; *akṣi-dṛśyaḥ*—before my eyes.

I bow down to You, O my Lord. You are affectionate, merciful, omnipotent, independent, and omnipresent. Please, show me Your grace. I am drowning in an ocean of distress, and I am helplessly ignorant. Please, revive me with Your merciful glance. Appear before me in Your divine form.

Dig-darśinī-ṭīkā

In a sudden wave of love aroused by the glorification, he now hopes to see the Lord directly^{xxvii} Aware that the chanting of Śrī-Kṛṣṇa’s names is the supreme resort in this circumstances, he prays with humility – *namo deva dāmodarānanta viṣṇo, prabho prasīda!*

“Obeisances to You.” “To You” is not used explicitly because of awe and fear, or because of the agitation provoked by love. After bowing down, he entreats: “O My Lord! Concede me Your grace.” Expressing his need, he says—*duḥkha-jalābḍhi-magnam atidīnam ajñam mām*, “I am drowning in the perpetual ocean of births and deaths,” or, “I’m afflicted by the pangs of separation from Your vision,” and, “I feel utterly miserable. Alternatively, “I am absolutely helpless, incapable of finding remedy.” Or again, “I am about to die,” or, “I am as good as dead.”

evam stuti-prabhāvāt sadyaḥ samuditena prema-viśeṣeṇa sāksād didṛkṣamāṇas tatra caikaṁ nāma-saṅkīrtanam eva parama-sādhanaṁ manyamānas tathaiva sa-kātaryaṁ prārthayate – nama iti. tubhyam ity adhyāhāryam eva, tac ca bhaya-gauravādīnā prema-vaikalyena vā sāksān na prayuktam. He prabho! He mad-iśvara! Prasīda. Prasādam āha – duḥkham samsārikaṁ tad-darśana-jam vā, tasya jālaṁ paramparā, tad evābḍhiḥ ānantiyādīnā, tasmin magnaṁ mām, ataeva ati-dīnam paramārtam, yad vā, tatra sat-sahāya-sāadhanādi-hīnatvāt paramākiñcana, yad vā mumūrṣum jīvan-mṛtam vā,

Furthermore, “I am utterly ignorant thence unable to find any solution.” Next, he defines the grace he expects—*kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyā anugrāha*. “Please, look at me with mercy, again and again,” or “shower upon me the nectar of Your merciful glance. Revive me.” Finally he clearly asserts his desire—*edhy akṣi-dṛṣyah*. “Please, appear before me.” He expresses his plea only gradually, because this last request is so lofty that it would be improper to mention it abruptly. Śrī-Kṛṣṇa’s direct vision is superior to His meditative vision, as elucidated with full logic by the Lord’s associates in the second part of *Śrī-Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam*.

tatra cājñam tat-pratikārādy anabhijñam, kṛpayā dṛṣṭi-nirīkṣanam, tasyā vṛṣṭyā paramparayā, kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-rūpāmṛta-vṛṣṭyā vā, anugrāha, samuddhṛtya jīvayety arthaḥ. tad evābhivyañjayati – akṣi-dṛṣyo mal-locana-gocara edhi bhava. evam prārthanā-krameṇa prārthanam kṛtam, prārthyasya parama-daurlābhyena, sahasā prāg eva nirdeśanarhatvāt. antar-darśanāt sāksād-darśana-māhātmyaṁ ca śrī-bhāgavat-pārsadaiḥ sa-nyāyam uktam, śrī-bhāgavatāmṛtottara-khaṇḍataḥ viśeṣato jñeyam.

Then he further justifies his aspiration by using a series of direct addresses.
 “O Deva!”
 “You have a divine form, hence I desire to see You.”
 “O Dāmodara!”
 “Because of Your special affection for the devotees You will certainly appear.”
 “O Ananta!”
 “You bestow unlimited merciful glances.”
 “O Prabho!”
 “You are endowed with limitless, inconceivable, amazing, and great, powers^{xxviii} Thus, even if not perceivable with mundane senses, You can appear to me.”
 “O Īśa!”
 “You are supremely independent.”
 Since His mercy can be directed even to the unfit (according to His will), this independence should be understood to be absolutely causeless.^{xxix}
 “O Viṣṇo!”
 “You are all-pervasive,” or “You are expert in entering groves and caves in Vṛndāvana,” consequently “You can as well appear before me without great effort.”

tatra deva he divya-rūpeti didṛkṣāyām hetuḥ, dāmodareti bhakta-vātsalya-viśeṣeṇākṣi-darśana-yogyatāyām. ato nānto yasmād ity ananteti kṛpā-dṛṣṭy-anugraheṇa. prabho! he acintyānantādbhūta-mahā-śakti-yukteti indriyāgrāhyasyāpy akṣi-dṛṣyatā-sambhāvanāyām. īśa! he parama-svatantreti ayogyam prati tādyānugraha-karaṇe kasyacid apy anapekṣatāyām jñeyam. kiñ ca, viṣṇo, he sarva-vyāpaka! yad vā, he śrī-vṛndāvana-nikuñja-kuharādi-praveśa-śīla, iti cākṣi-dṛṣyatārtham dūrāgamana-śramādikaṁ nāstīti.

Alternatively, “You are undivided, (*ananta*), and all-pervasive, (*Viṣṇu*). However, O Dāmodara, the affectionate exchange with Your devotees is above such limits^{xxx}.” The rest of the verse is to be understood as explained above.

athavā he ananta, aparicchinna! Viṣṇo sarva-vyāpin! Tathāpi he dāmodarety evam parama-vātsalya-viśeṣeṇa tavākṛtam kim api nāstīti dhvanitam. Anyat samānam ity eṣā dik.

Text 7

kuverātmajau baddha-mūrtyaiva yadvat

*tvayā mocitau bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca
tathā prema-bhaktim svakām me prayaccha
na mokṣe graho me' sti dāmodareha*

kuvera-ātmajau—the two sons of Kuvera; *baddha-murtyā*—when Your body was bound (to the mortar); *yadvat*—just like; *tvayā*—by You; *mocitau*—liberated; *bhakti-bhājau*—recipients for bhakti; *kṛtau*—made; *tathā*—likewise; *prema-bhaktim*—the highest level of devotion; *svakām*—Your; *me*—to me; *prayaccha*—grant; *na*—not; *mokṣe*—in liberation; *grahaḥ*—aspiration; *me*—my; *asti*—there is; *dāmodara*—O Dāmodara; *iha*— in prema-bhakti only.

O Dāmodara! While tied to the mortar, You redeemed the two sons of Kuvera and granted them bhakti. Similarly, bestow also on me Your prema-bhakti. But I shall not accept liberation.

Dig-darśinī-tīkā

After praying for a direct vision with intense devotion and ardent expectation, Satyavrata Ṛṣi is now stirred by devotional emotions, and he realizes that the Lord is achieved only by few, and only by loving devotion. Thus he recites this verse—*kuverātmajau...*

Alternatively, these are his thoughts, “My heart will not find solace in a single vision and the anguish of separation will follow. Only by loving devotion I may have Him forever. But I am a great offender; how can this possibly happen to me?” Still, certain that the Lord's affection is so glorious that it fulfils even the impossible, he asks for loving devotion discarding liberation—*kuverātmajau...*

While bound with ropes to the mortar, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dragged it, entering between the two Yamala trees (the mortar was stuck, and He uprooted the trees by pulling).

ittham prema-viśeṣeṇa paramoṭkaṅṭhyā saha sāṅśād-darśanam prārthya tata eva sadyo-jāta-prema-bhakti-viśeṣeṇa tasya parama-daurlabhyaṁ manyamānas tatra ca paramopāya-bhūtām prema-bhaktim abhijñāya, yad vā, sakṛd-darśane mano' trṭpti viraha-duḥkhottaratām cāsankhya sadā tad-vaśi-karaṇāya prema-bhaktim evaikam upāyam abhijñāya; atra ca paramāparādhino mama katham sā sambhaved ity āsankhya śrī-bhagavad-vātsalya-mahimnā cāsambhavyam api sarvam eva sambhaved iti nīcītya mokṣa-tyāgena prema-bhaktim eva prārthayate – kuvereti. baddhayā gopyā pāsair udūkhale śṛṅkhalitayā mūrtyā śrī-vigraheṇaiveti tayor madhye svayam praveśāt

This feat of the Lord, Who is distinguished by such exquisite pastimes, evokes His direct manifestation and His bodily contact.

The sons of Kuvera were thus delivered from the curse of Śrī Nārada and from the cycle of births and deaths. Not only that: they obtained supreme devotion as well. Therefore he says—*bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca*.

“*Bhakti*, the ultimate perfection, had always been their shelter.” This indicates that, indeed, *prema-bhakti* was granted to them.^{xxi}

As the Lord Himself said (10.10.42), “The sublime feeling that you desired has risen in you and your material sufferings are gone forever.”

The meaning is—“You longed for the topmost sentiment, *prema*, and this sentiment was duly aroused in your heart. Thereafter your births and deaths, and with them any material suffering, are gone for good.”

parama-sundara-līlādi-viśiṣṭasya bhagavataḥ sāṅśād-darśana-sparśanādikaṁ sūcitam mocitau śrī-nārada-śāpāt saṁsārāc ca. na kevalam tāvad eva, parama-bhaktiś ca tābhyāṁ dattety āha – bhaktim bhajataḥ parama-sādhyatvenāśrayataḥ, na kathaṅcīd api tyajata iti tathā tau. evaṅ ca prema-bhaktir eva dattety abhipretam. athā ca śrī-bhagavad-vacanam – “sañjāto mayi bhāvo vām īpsitaḥ paramo” bhavaḥ' iti. asyārthāḥ, vām yuvayor īpsito' pekṣitaḥ paramo bhavaḥ premā mayi samyag jāta eva, na bhavaḥ punar janma saṁsāra-duḥkhaṁ vā yasmāt sa iti.

Having cited their example, Satyavrata prays—*tathā prema-bhaktim svakām me prayaccha*, “O Dāmodara, in the same way, give me the exclusive shelter of Your lotus feet,” or “invest me with the devotion by which You become the exclusive focus in one's life.”

The Lord may suggest, “Why do you neglect liberation? You can accept it along with devotion, as the two sons of Kuvera did; otherwise you will still have the problem of births and deaths.”

Preventing such a proposal, he states, *na mokṣe graho me' sti*.

“I'm longing for devotion, not for liberation.”

If births and deaths cease upon achieving devotion, let it be, and if they don't, it is still fine with me. This is certainly not my preoccupation.

The esoteric meaning is: the owner of a *cintamani*^{xxxii} gem knows that everything he may ever need is included in the gem. Why shall he covet anything else separately?

he dāmodara! tathā tadvat svakām tvac-caraṇāravindaikāśrayām etad-rūpaika-viśayām vā me mahyaṁ prakarṣeṇa yaccha dehi. nanu kim atrāgrahaṇa? kuverātmajavan mokṣo'pi grhyatām anyathā janma-maraṇādi-saṁsārāpatteḥ. tatrāha – neti. iha asyām prema-bhaktāv eva mama graha āgraho' sti, na ca mokṣe graho' sti. ayam arthaḥ, prema-bhaktiyā saṁsāra-dhvaṁso bhavati cet tarhi bhavatu nāma, na syāc cet tarhi māstu nāma, tatra mamāpekṣo nāstīti. atra gūḍho' yaṁ bhāvaḥ, cintāmaṇau kara-sṭhe sarvam eva svayam setsyati, kin tad eka-mātra-tuccha-

Another meaning is —upon hearing , “O Dāmodara, give me Your supreme devotion,” the Lord may grow suspicious—“I am tied to this mortar.... Does he want to keep Me bound forever?” Therefore, with the words *na mokṣe graho me'sti*. Satyavrata protests, “Isn't it my urgency to free You from those ropes?” And the tone of his voice makes it clear that he will certainly unfasten Him. “But please, bestow on me the unique loving devotion for this very form of Yours.”

Or, the sense can be, “Please, give me devotion here in Vṛndāvana.” In order to witness the Lord's pastimes, he craves to reside eternally in Vṛndāvana where devotion permeated with bliss, appears unparalleled and where this exclusive manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can be directly experienced. The rest of the meaning is as before.

*dravya-grahaṇeneti. yad vā, 'he dāmodara, svakām prema-bhaktim prayaccha' ity evaṁ pāṣa-baddhodara-bhagavad-
viśayaka-prema-bhakti-prārthanayā nityam udare pāṣa-bandhanāgraham āśaṅkhyāha, mokṣe pāṣa-bandhanāt tava
mocane mamāgraho nāsti kim? kākvā asty evety arthah. kintu iha asminn eva rūpe svakām asādhāraṇām prema-bhaktim
prayaccheti. yad vā, iha vṛndāvane prema-bhaktim prayacchety anvayaḥ. tataś ca tatraiva tasyāḥ sukha-
viśeṣāvīrbhāvakatvāt prādurbhāva-viśeṣac ca, tathā tasya sāḅśād-darśana-viśeṣākāratvāc ca, tathā tatraiva tad-vihāri-śrī-
bhagavad-dīdṛkṣā-viśeṣac ca, tatra sadā nivāso' pi prārthita ity ūhyam. anyac ca pūrvavad eva.*

Text 8

*namas te' stu dāmne sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne
tvadīyodarāyātha viśvasya dhāmne
namo rādhikāyai tvadīya-priyāyai
namo' nanta-līlāya devāya tubhyam*

namaḥ—obeisances; *te*—Your; *astu*—let there be; *dāmne*—to the rope; *sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne*—the abode of blazing light; *tvadīya-udarāya*—to Your belly; *atha*—also; *viśvasya*—of the universe; *dhāmne*—the substratum; *namaḥ*—obeisances; *rādhikāyai*—to Śrī Rādhikā; *tvadīya-priyāyai*—who is Your beloved; *namaḥ*—obeisances; *ananta-līlāya*—performer of eternal pastimes; *devāya*—divine; *tubhyam*—to You.

My respects to this great rope, reservoir of dazzling effulgence, and to Your belly, which contains the entire cosmos.

Obeisances to Your beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

O Lord! I bow down to You, the transcendental hero of these divine and eternal pastimes.”

Dig-darśinī-ṭikā

Concluding this glorification, Satyavrata Ṛṣi pays homages to the Lord's extraordinary bodily features, retinue, intimates, etc., one by one. Hoping to fulfil his ambition, or out of devotion, he says—*namas te' stu dāmne sphurad-dīpti-dhāmne*. “I bow down to this magnificent rope, source of dazzling light, which binds Your belly.”

This image evokes the quintessence of *Brahman*, which is inherent in the Lord and in the rope which surrounds Him. Then he continues—*atha tvadīyodarāya viśvasya dhāmne*.

“Thereafter I bow down to Your belly; by being tied in these exceptional circumstances it displays the beauty and the tenderness of these infancy pastimes.”

*evaṁ stutim samāpayan sva-prārthita-siddhaye bhakti-viśeṣeṇa vā tadīyāsādhāraṇa-parīkarāvayava-parivārādīn api
pratyekaṁ pṛthak praṇamati – namas te' stv iti. te tava dāmne udara-bandhana-mahā-pāśāya namo' stu. katham bhūtāya?
sphūrantyā dīptes tejaso dhāmne āśrayāya, evaṁ tasyāpi brahma-ghana-rūpatābhipretā. athānantaram tvadīyāya udarāya
namo' stu, pāṣa-bandhana tenaiva saundaryāder vātsalyāder bālyā-līlādeś ca viśeṣataḥ prakāśanāt.*

How is this belly? “It is the substratum of the whole universe.”

It includes the manifestation of all moving and non-moving objects: the lotus containing all the fourteen planetary systems springs up from this very abdomen. This evokes the Universal Form which was shown twice to Mother Yaśodā. In fact, by fastening Kṛṣṇa's belly, Yaśodā subdued not only Kṛṣṇa, but also the entire universe contained in it. The Lord displayed His exclusive affection for His devotee by allowing her to tie Him, although it is otherwise impossible to bind the unlimited Lord. The inconceivable feat of fitting the contraction of the whole universe within the ties educes His mind-boggling potency.

The reason of offering respects first to the rope and then to the belly is the position of the rope over the tied abdomen, or the intention to express the superior status of the belly.

*katham bhūtāya? viśvasya carācara-prapañca-jātasya dhāmne ādhārāya, tata eva caturdaśa-bhuvanātmaka-
kamatopatteḥ tatraiva ca mātaram prati vāra-dvayam viśva-rūpa-pradarśanād iti dik. evam udara-bandhanena viśvasyāpi
bandhanāpatteḥ śrī-yaśodayā viśvam api vaśī-kṛtam iti dhvanitam. tathā īśasya bandhanāśambhave' pi bandhana-svikāreṇa
bhakta-vātsalya-viśeṣas tathā bandhanena prapañcāsaṅkocāvasthityādi-samāveśya tarkāgocaravād aiśvarya-viśeṣas ca*

dhvanita iti dik. dāma-namaskārānantaram udara-namaskāraś codaropari dāmno vartamānatvāt yathottaram utkarṣa-vivakṣayā vā.

Now he offers obedience to Śrī Bhagavatī, Śrī-Rādhā, knowing that by the mercy of the most dear associate of the Lord every desire, albeit unrealistic, may be fulfilled—*namo rādhikāyai tvadīya-priyāyai*.

By mentioning her name he refers to all the other cowherd girls as well, although she is named alone because of her prominence.^{xxxiii}

Her appellation, Rādhikā, reflects her character: she ceaselessly worships (*ārādhana*) the Lord. Consequently she is very dear to Him.

Alternatively, Rādhikā may be taken as her proper name, as opposed to the above said etymological sense.^{xxxiv} In this case Her name is not the result of a particular worship and her status doesn't have external causes. She is eternally the Lord's beloved.

With the words *tvadīya-priyāyai* he expresses her greatness—"I bow down to her because she cares for all Your associates,^{xxxv} due to the intensity of her devotion for You—what to speak of how much she cares for You!"

Such is the level of her loving devotion.

idānīm tadīya- priyatama-jana-kṛpayai vānchātītam api sarvam eva susidhyed ity āśayena bhagavatīm śrī-rādhām praṇamati – nama iti. tayā ca sarvā eva gopikā upalakṣyante, kim vā tāsu mukhyata-mātra saivaiikoktā. śrī-rādhiketi – sarvadaiva śrī-bhagavad-ārādhana-viśeṣād-anvartha-samjñā, ata eva tvadīya-priyēti. yad vā, rādhiketi rūdhi-samjñā. tatas cārāadhanānapekṣayā sā nitya-priyāveti. tatra ca tvadīyā api sarve janāḥ priyās tvat-prītyā yasyāḥ, kimuta vaktavyam tvam iti. evaṁ tasyās tasmin prema-viśeṣaḥ sūcītaḥ.

Alternatively, "Your dear ones ought to be universally worshipped. She is Your beloved, therefore I bow down to her."

Then, wishing to close with a supreme glorification of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, such as the Rāsa-līlā, but to keep it confidential at the same time, he concludes with this small gesture^{xxxvi}, as for the maxim "a meal should terminate with sweets"—*namo'nanta-līlāya devāya tubhyam*.

If *devāya* is in apposition with *ananta-līlāya*, the sense is, "I bow down to the Divine One, Whose pastimes are also divine." Otherwise the meaning is, "You are absorbed in eternal pastimes with Śrī-Rādhikā, therefore I bow down to You." "Having thus indicated the whole Gokula pastime, I bow down to it."

This is the orientation of the purport.

tasyai namaḥ yad vā, tvat-priyāyai iti. tatas ca, yasya tvam priyo' si, so' pi jagad-vandyāḥ syāt. eṣā ca tavaiva priyā, atas tasyai namo' stu. tatas ca tayā saha rāsa-kṛīḍādikam parama-stutitvenānte varṇayitum icchan tac ca parama-gopyatvenānbhivyañjayan 'madhureṇa samāpayet' iti nyāyena kiñcid eva saṅketenoddīṣan praṇamati, devāya lokottarāyēti, līlānām api lokottarābhipretā. yad vā, śrī-rādhikayā saha nīrantara-kṛīḍā-parāya, ataeva anantara-līlāya tubhyam nama iti. evaṁ gokula-viṣayikā sarvāpi līloddīṣṭā, tasyai ca nama iti bhāva ity eṣā dik.

Kārtika Māhātmya

Introduction

*dāmodaram prapadye 'ham śrī-rādhā-ramaṇam prabhum
prabhāvād yasya tat-preṣṭhaḥ kārtikaḥ sevito bhavet*

"I take shelter in the Supreme Lord, Dāmodaraḥ, Who is Çrēmaté Rādhikā's beloved, and under Whose influence His dearest month, Kārtika, can be served⁹." (1)

The activities to be performed during Kārtika are exhaustively dealt with in *Purāṇas* such as *Skanda* and *Padma*. Here I'm summarizing the essential features of those descriptions. (2)

In this month a Vaiṣṇava should regularly worship Śrī Dāmodara and undertake vows such as bathing before sunrise, giving alms, and so on. Worship and other activities for specific occasions will be discussed later in this *vīlāsa*.

(3-4)

Cogency of Kārtika vows

O Nārada, best of pious souls! After attaining the rare human form, whoever does not follow the duties prescribed for Kārtika is like a murderer of his mother and father. One who wastes this month without undertaking any *vrata*¹⁰ is excluded from any religious duty and will be born in an animal species. Such an individual shall be counted among *brāhmaṇa*-murderers, cow-slaughterers, gold-thieves, and congenital liars. If this person is a widow, hell is her secure destination. If he is a householder, other pious deeds will be worthless, and he will reside in hell until the dissolution of the universe. If he is a

brāhmaēa, he will be neglected by all the demigods, beginning with Indra. Especially *sannyāsés*, widows, and *vanaprasthas* who fail to undertake Vaiñēava vows during Kārtika will fall in the infernal regions. (5-12)
O great *brāhmaṇa*, if the opportunity to perform *vratas* during Kārtika is neglected all pious merits amassed in the past are reduced to ashes, the study of *Vedas* and *Purānas* becomes futile, charity, *japa*, and penances become fruitless, and reaching *svarga*, becomes impossible, despite the performance of countless sacrifices and hundreds of Śrāddhā¹ ceremonies. (5-17)

Whoever wastes the month of Kārtika without undertaking any vow for Viṣṇu, O Nārada, will not get the result of former pious deeds. (18)

O sage, he who passes Kārtika and Cāturmāsya¹² without imposing any regulations on himself shall be considered the lowest of his race and a killer of *brāhmaēas*. (19)

O Nārada, I can not fathom the destiny of persons who fail to offer *piṇḍa*¹³ to the ancestors during *pitā-pakṣā*¹⁴, to undertake vows during Kārtika, to offer oblations to the Sages during Črāvaēa, to take part of the swing festival during Caitra, to bathe in pure water during Māgha and to follow the Āmardakē *vrata* during the conjunction with Puñyā¹⁵, the Rauhiēāñōami *vrata* during the month of Črāvaēa, and the Črāvaēa-dvādaçē *vrata*. (20-22)
(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

A human being who wastes the month of Kārtika is like the fool who acquires *acintāmaṇi* gem and then throws it in a morass. O *brāhmaṇas*, one will be rejected by Śrī Kṛṣṇa if he spends Kārtika without regulations, because this month is very dear to Him. (23-24)

(*Padma Purāna*, dialogue between Nārada, Śaunaka, and other sages)

Compulsion of specific vows such as ablutions and charity.

O son Nārada, even a twice born shall be known as the lowest of men if in this month he does not resolve to perform charity, ablutions, *homa*¹⁶, or *japa* for the pleasure of Čré Hari. (25)

Those who do not give alms and do not take on *homa*, *japa*, or other religious observances during Kārtika are certainly losers, because they will not reach their coveted goals. By showing indifference for Janārdana during the month of Kārtika, they are doomed to suffer in Yama's abode along with their ancestors. Indeed, those who do not devotedly worship Keṣava during Kārtika will go to hell, where they will be tormented by the Yamadūtas. (26-28)

This most rare human form, attained after billions of births, will be taken away from those who do not worship Viṣṇu during Kārtika. Ten years of pious activities are nullified for those who in this month do not worship Hari, listen to *Hari-kathā*¹⁷, and see Vaiñēavas. (29-30)

(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Greatness of Kārtika

First I shall discuss the general virtues of Kārtika and then I will deal with specific activities and places related to it. (31)

General virtues of Kārtika

The merits accrued by bathing in all holy places and by performing all sorts of charity cannot match the results attainable in this month even if multiplied by the millions. (32)

My dear son, visiting holy places, performing and giving *dakṣiṇā*¹⁸, residing in Puñkara, Kurukñetra, or in the Himālayas, or offering in charity the weight of Mount Meru in gold are all very nice, but only Kārtika is dear to Keçava in all respects. O Nārada, these are the facts: in this month, pious deeds aimed at Čré Viñēu's satisfaction yield imperishable fruits¹⁹, for this is the best month, the holiest among the holy and the purest among the purifiers. (33-36)

O Nārada, the merits and demerits obtained during Kārtika are like rivers, mountains, and oceans in that they are never exhausted. There is no month equal to Kārtika, no *yuga* equal to Satya, no scripture equal to the *Veda*, and no *tirtha* equal to Gauge. O great sage, this is the best month and is always dear to Vaiṣṇavas. By serving Kārtika with devotion a Vaiṣṇava can deliver any of his ancestors who are suffering in hell. (37-40)
(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Of the twelve months, this month is particularly dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Viṣṇu certainly rewards the devotee who worships Him during Kārtika with residence in His own abode, even if worshipped with minimum items. Dāmodara is famous as *bhakta-vatsala*²⁰, and His month imbibes His characteristics: it rewards even a tiny effort with huge results.

Of all living species, the ephemeral human form is seldom achieved by the incarnated being, and throughout his existence the month of Kārtika, which is so dear to Hari, is even rarer. (41-44)
(*Padma Purāna*, dialogue between Nārada, Śaunaka, and other sages)

Virtues of Kārtika vratas

In this world, the results of vows last for one lifetime only, but the effects of Kārtika *vratas* extend up to one hundred lives. (45)

O best of *brāhmaṇas*, the results of bathing at Akrūra-tīrtha while fasting on the full moon day of Kārtika can be achieved simply by hearing about this Vaiṣṇava-*vrata*²¹. This type of *vrata* yields pious results equal to those available from pilgrimages to Vārāṅśī, Kurukṣetra, Naimiṣāraṅya, Puṅkara, and Arbuda²². By undertaking this *vrata* even a person who never performs a sacrifice and who never offers *piṇḍa* to his ancestors can attain the status of a Vaiṇēava. By restricting his usual eating habits in the course of this Kārtika *vrata* one will definitely obtain liberation, earning a form similar to Kāñēa's. (45-49)

O eminent sage, after executing a Kārtika *vrata* a person will not take more low births²³, be he a *brāhmaṇa*, a *kṛatriya*, a *vaiçya*, or a *çūdra*. (50)

O celebrated sage, a person who undertakes the Vaiṣṇava *vrata* according to his best capacity has liberation already waiting on his palm. A *vrata* yields the maximum results even when minimally performed during Kārtika. This month is worshipped even by *devarçis*²⁴ and *pitās*. (51-52)
(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Virtues of specific activities

O excellent *brāhmaṇa*! Charity, penance, *homa*, and *japa* all give unfading results when performed during Kārtika. Moreover, whatever one donates, especially eatables, for Lord Viṣṇu's satisfaction, yields perpetual results. (53-54)

Whoever sits in *svastikāsana*²⁵ during this month is rewarded with a full year worth of Agnihotra sacrifices²⁶. A woman who draws a *maḍḍala*²⁷ in the temple of Keçava will shine in heaven like a *kapoté*²⁸ bird. The man who regularly offers meals (to Çré Viñēu) during Kārtika will not meet with calamities throughout the reign of fourteen Indras²⁹. (55-57)

By eating on leaves of the *Brahma*³⁰ tree, all past sins are annihilated, every desire is fulfilled, the merit of every pilgrimage accrues, and hell will never be seen. O great sage, this *palāça* tree is also known as *Brahma*, for it fulfills any desire. A *çūdra*, however, must skip the middle part of the leaf, otherwise he will experience hell for the life span of fourteen Indras. (58-60)
Donating sesame, bathing in a river, hearing saintly discourses, serving saintly persons, and eating on *brahma* leaves all confer liberation when performed during Kārtika. (61)

In this month, the merit of donating one thousand cows accrues to the person who is awake in front of Śrī Dāmodara at dawn, and Śrī Viṣṇu's abode is at hand for someone who is awake during the last *yāma*³¹ of the night. (62-63)

Kārtika *vratas* like serving saints, feeding cows, hearing holy speeches, worshipping Śrī Viṣṇu, and being awake during the last three hours of the night are all rare feats in the age of Kali. (64)

The benefit of donating thousands of *jala-dhenus*³² when the sun is in Taurus can be achieved in this month merely by ablutions. (65)

The merit of bathing in the Sannihati lake, Kurukṣetra, on Sunday, at the time of a solar eclipse, is obtained by a single bath during Kārtika. (66)

O great sage, there is perpetual value in grains and water offered to the ancestors during Kārtika, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dearest month. (67)

O Nārada, just by passing this month in the merriment of music one may not take birth again. I have personally witnessed this. (68)

During Kārtika, every step yields the benefit of an *Aśvamedha* sacrifice while circumambulating Śrī Viṣṇu's temple. By singing, playing, or dancing with devotion before Lord Hari one reaches the eternal realm. By reading Śrī Hari's thousand names or the episode of Gaṇendra's liberation, one will never again experience birth or death. By reciting prayers and singing during the last *yāma* of the night, one will dwell in Śvetadvīpa along with his ancestors. O great sage, by offering eatables to Śrī Hari one will reside in heaven for as many *yugas* as the number of *yavas*³³ in those foodstuffs. By burning *aguru*³⁴ and camphor for the pleasure of the Lord one will not take birth again, not even when the *yuga* will end. (72-74)

Moreover, for those who hear *Viṣṇu-kathā* in this month, each half verse or quarter of verse yields the fruits of donating one hundred cows; indeed, O great sage, all other duties should be given up in favor of hearing scriptures from holy men. Be it for spiritual benefit or with other expectations, by engaging in *Hari-kathā* one uplifts hundreds of his family's generations. A person will burn all sinful reactions and gain the fruit of ten thousand sacrifices for each day of Kārtika spent in the delight of the scriptures. In fact, Madhusūdana is not as pleased by sacrifices or by charity of cows and elephants as He is pleased by discourses from the scriptures during Kārtika. O eminent sage, by hearing *Hari-kathā* one can transcend the distress accumulated in millions of births. By regularly trying to read *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* during this month one gains the benefit of reading all eighteen *Purānas*. (75-81)

Furthermore, during Kārtika a man should cultivate supreme devotion by living among Vaiṣṇavāḥ, at the cost of giving up acts of piety and other prescribed duties. (82)

(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

In this month, one who sleeps on the floor, maintains celibacy, worships Śrī Dāmodara, and eats only *haviçya*³⁵ items using *palāça* leaves is freed from all sins and will taste the bliss of Lord Viñēu in Vaikuṇṭha³⁶. (83-84)

By bathing at dawn, controlling the senses, performing *japa*, and eating *haviçya* throughout Kārtika, one is freed from all sins, and by eating only once a day he will become famous, strong, and courageous. (85-86)

He who eats on *palāça* leaves and offers his food to Śrī Hari becomes sinless and achieves liberation. But non-*brāhmaṇas* should never use the middle part of the leaf. (87)

Thousands of offenses and even the greatest sins of someone who worship Lord Hari during Kārtika will all be forgiven, and if he offers to Śrī Viṣṇu His favorite candied sugar and sweet rice with *ghee*, and honors the Lord's remnants, he gains the same merit of performing sacrifices, day after day. (88-89)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Nārada, Śaunaka, and other sages)

Those who bathe, stay awake³⁷, offer lamps, and care for Tulasé's garden during Kārtika will obtain a form similar to Lord Viñēu's. Those who perform these practices for just three days become the object of the demigods' prayers. What, then, shall I say about those who can do it throughout their life? (90-91)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Types of Kārtika vratas

Specific Kārtika *vratas* are: *Hari-jāgaraṇam*³⁸, bathing at dawn, tending Tulasé, completing a charitable work³⁹, and offering *dēpas*⁴⁰. A person who undertakes these five vows can attain both *bhukti* and *mukti*⁴¹. (92-93)

Hari-jāgaraṇam may be performed in temples of Viṣṇu or Śiva, near Aśvattha⁴² trees, or in places where Tulasé grows. (94)
A person who cannot get bathing water for his ablutions, or who is sick, should purify himself by chanting Lord Viṣṇu's names. (95)

If a charitable work cannot be completed in time, one can feed *brāhmaṇas* in a quantity proportional to the work, and thus temporarily fulfill his vow. (96)

If one is unable to offer a *dīpa*, one can endeavor to revive another's *dīpa* or protect it from the wind. (97)

In the absence of Tulasī plants, one can serve Vaiṣṇavas and *brāhmaṇas* instead. And if none of the five vows is feasible, then by serving *brāhmaṇas*, cows, and Aśvattha or Vaṭa⁴³ trees, he can still complete his *vrata*. (98)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Virtues of offering dīpa (dīpa-dāna)⁴⁴

The sins accumulated in millions of *kalpas* vanish in an instant when a *dīpa* is offered during Kārtika. O great *brāhmaṇa*, listen to this *dīpa*'s virtues, which are dear to Keśava. By offering a *dīpa* in this month a person will not take birth on earth again. (99-100)

This *dīpa-dāna* bestows all the benefits available at Kurukṣetra during solar eclipses and at Narmadā during lunar eclipses, multiplied by the millions. O great sage, what is the value of Aśvamedha⁴⁵ sacrifices for someone who in this month lights *ghee* or sesame oil lamps? By this offering to the Lord, all prescribed activities, even if devoid of *mantra*, rituals, and cleanliness, are brought to perfection. Anyone who offers *dēpa* to Keçava during Kārtika is actually performing all sorts of ablutions and sacrificial ceremonies. (101-104)

On the other hand, all the pious deeds of the three worlds are not effective⁴⁶ if this Kārtika *dēpa* does not burn before Lord Keçava. (105)

O *brāhmaṇa*, since time immemorial the ancestors are praying, 'If a scion who can please Lord Keśava by this *dīpa-dāna* would appear in our lineage, we would certainly all become liberated by the mercy of the Lord, who has a *cakra* on His hand.' (106-107)

Moreover, even if the volume of one's sins equals Mount Meru, this *dīpa-dāna* can certainly incinerate them. Be it in a temple of Lord Vāsudeva or in one's private house, this offering yields amazing results. Indeed, the person who lights this *dīpa* before Madhusūdana is fortunate and glorious, because even hundreds of sacrifices and ablutions in holy places cannot match the results instantly acquired by this *dīpa-dāna*. (108-111)

Even one who never performs religious rituals or even the worst sinner will surely be purified by this offering. O Nārada, in the three worlds there is no sin that can stand before this Kārtika *dīpa*. In fact, by presenting this *dīpa* before Lord Vāsudeva, the eternal abode can be reached without obstruction. (112-114)

Now I will tell you about the merits accruing to one who offers a *dīpa* with camphor throughout Kārtika, or particularly on the day of Dvādaśī. O Nārada, all the born or to-be-born members of one's family line, including all the innumerable forefathers, will enjoy in heaven for a long time according to their wishes, and will attain liberation by the grace of Lord Hari, who has a *cakra* on His hand. (115-117)

In this month, O great *brāhmaṇa*, a person who illuminates Lord Keśava's temple even for the sake of gambling purifies his family up to seven generations. And those who kindle this Kārtika *dīpa* in a temple of Lord Viṣṇu will prosper with wealth, progeny, good reputation, and fame. Just as friction manifests the fire inherent in any wood, so this *dīpa-dāna* undoubtedly manifests *dharma* (present in any action)⁴⁷. (118-120)

O eminent *brāhmaṇa*, the destitute should also arrange for this offering throughout the month, until the full-moon day, even if it is necessary to sell his own person to do so. (121)

The fool who does not offer this *dīpa* in Lord Keśava's temple during Kārtika, O sage, should never be considered a Vaiṣṇava⁴⁸. (122)

(*Skanda Purāṇa*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Between the offering of all existing wealth and the offering of a *dīpa* during Kārtika there is no comparison – in fact, the latter is certainly more precious. (123)

(*Nāradya Purāṇa*, dialogue between Rukmāṅgada and Mohinī)

A person who kindles an *akhaṇḍa-dīpa*⁴⁹ before Lord Hari will leave for the Lord's abode on a effulgent vehicle and live there in bliss. (124)

(*Padma Purāna*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Virtues of reviving someone else's dīpa

All the results acquired by donating grains during *pitṛ-pakṣa* or by distributing water in the months of Jyeṣṭha or Āśādhā are easily gained in the course of Kārtika merely by reviving a *dīpa* offered by someone else. In this month the fruits of Rājasūya⁵⁰ and Aṣvamedha sacrifices are attainable just by reviving another's *dēpa* and by serving the Vaiñēavas. (125-126)
O best of kings, the person who revives a *dīpa* in Hari's temple shall never suffer Yamarāja's torments again. (127)
The results of reviving someone else's *dīpa* during Kārtika cannot be obtained by any other means, not even by the greatest sacrifices. (128)

Once even a mouse attained the rare human form and reached the supreme destination after reviving a *dīpa* on Ekādaśī⁵¹. (129)

(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Virtues of a dīpa on the temple dome (śikhara-dīpa)

O great sage, know that the stock of sins will continue melting as long as a *dīpa* shines on top of the temple (130)
The fruit accrued by offering in charity the whole earth with her belt of oceans to *brāhmaṇas*, by donating millions of milk cows, or by giving everything in charity to Vaiṣṇavas, is not even a sixteenth part of the result yielded by installing a *dīpa* on top of Hari's temple. (131-133)

Moreover, a person who settles a *dīpa* on the dome or within the temple delivers hundreds of generations in his lineage even if he is hired, and in the family of those who admire with great devotion the illuminated temple of Lord Keśava no one will ever experience hell. (134-135)

Observing a human offering a lamp to Lord Viṣṇu, even the demigods think, "When will I get his association?" In fact, even the post of Indra is within the reach of someone who offers this *śikhara-dīpa*. (134-137)

(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Virtues of a string of lamps (dīpa-mālā)

A person who arranges a *dīpa-mālā* inside and outside Lord Viṣṇu's temple will attain a form similar to the Lord's, with conch and *cakra*. Moreover, he is assured that in his family line hundreds of thousands will not go to hell. (138-139)

O sage, he who arranges a *dīpa-mālā* inside and outside Lord Viṣṇu's temple will leave for the supreme abode on the path illuminated by those very *dīpas*. (140)

(*Skanda Purāna*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

A person who arranges a beautiful *dīpa-mālā* during Kārtika and particularly on the days of Ekādaśī, when the Lord awakens, and Dvādaśī, illuminates the four directions with his radiance and, situated on a luminous vehicle, brightens the universe with the luster of his body. He will live in Viṣṇuloka⁵² for as many thousands years as the number of ghee lamps that he arranged. (141-143)

(*Bhaviṣya Purāna*)

Virtues of a dīpa elevated to the sky (ākāśa-dīpa)⁵³

A person who in this month elevates a lamp high in the sky delivers his family and reaches the abode of Lord Viṣṇu. (144)

Now listen to the merits of elevating *dīpas* or floating them on water in Lord Viṣṇu's honor during Kārtika: these *dīpas* will bring wealth, abundance, prosperity, all sorts of opulence, progeny, a benign glance and wisdom. (145-146)

Moreover, the sages say that anyone who arranges a Kārtika *dīpa* for the house of a *brāhmaṇa* will gain the results of an Agniṣṭoma sacrifice⁵⁴. *Dēpas* placed at crossroads, by the sides of main roads, in *brāhmaēas'* houses, at the roots of trees, in cow-pens, in forests, or in caves, all bestow great results. (147-148)

(*Padma Purāna*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Ākāśa-dīpa-mantra:

*dāmodarāya nabhasi tulāyām lolayā saha
pradīpan te prayacchāmi namo' nantāya vedhase*

In this month of Kārtika I'm elevating this *dīpa* to the sky for You, O Dāmodara, Who are accompanied by Lakṣmī⁵⁵. O Unlimited, O Supreme Creator, I offer my obeisances to You. (149)

(*Padma Purāna*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Virtues of Kārtika related to specific locations

During Kārtika, a person who bathes or gives alms, no matter where, earns the merits of an Agnihotra sacrifice, and the results are even more if this pious deed includes worship as well; the results are millions of times more if in this month one bathes at Kurukṣetra or in the Gaṅgā, O scion of Bhṛgu, and even greater if one bathes at Puṣkara. Finally, bathing and worshipping in Dvārakā bestows *Kṛṣṇa-sālokya*⁵⁶. (150-151)

O assembled sages, each of the seven holy cities⁵⁷ offer the same amount of pious merits, but Mathurā stands alone, because only there Lord Hari displayed His character as Dāmodara. Therefore the Lord is extremely pleased and certainly offers the highest reward to one who performs Kārtika *vratas* in Mathurā. As Prayāga and Gaigā are to be frequented in the month of Māgha and Vaiçakha, respectively, so is Mathurā in the month of Kārtika; to be in Mathurā during Kārtika, in fact, is the highest possible achievement, and those who, besides being there, perform ablutions and worship Dāmodara, will undoubtedly obtain *Kāññā-sārūpya*. (152-155)

O *brāhmaṇa*, this Mathurā is seldom approachable by men, because only here the Lord gives Himself to those who worship Him with devotion. Elsewhere He offers *bhukti* and *mukti* to His worshippers, this is true, but He does not grant them *bhakti*, the force which can subdue Him. However, those who in the course of Kārtika worship Lord Dāmodara in Mathurā even once can easily attain this very *bhakti*. (156-158)

In Mathurā the Lord will accept even worship devoid of proper rules, *mantras*, and ingredients. The atonement of sins, which are otherwise expiated after death, is thoroughly achieved by worshipping Lord Dāmodara in Mathurā, during Kārtika.

It was in this month that the child Dhruva⁵⁸ quickly obtained the vision of Lord Hari by worshipping Him in Mathurā, although He can rarely be seen even by great *yogés*. (159-161)

Mathurā can be easily traced in Bhārata-varṣa, and Kārtika comes regularly every year, yet there are fools who are still carried around in the ocean of material existence!⁵⁹ (162)

When one worships Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His dear Rādhikā, what is the use of sacrifices, penances, and pilgrimage to other holy places? During Kārtika, in fact, all the existing holy places, rivers and lakes are present in Mathurā. Therefore one can reach Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme, merely by entering once in Mathurā-purī, for, this is the Lord's birthplace. (163-165)

If mocking Lord Hari's devotee in Mathurā could produce such an amazing result⁶⁰, what shall then be said about worshipping Lord Hari with faith and devotion? (167)

(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Prescribed duties for Kārtika

Beginning the vrata

In the month of Aśvini, on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight, one should earnestly undertake his Kārtikavrata. (168)

Everyday he should wake up by the last *yāma*⁶¹ of the night and, after due purification, he should awaken the Lord with hymns. Then he should offer *nirajana*⁶² to Him. Later, in the company of other Vaiññēavas, he should blissfully listen to the qualities of Lord Viññēu, engage in singing, and perform *maigala-ārātrika* during the early morning hours. (169-170)
He should then go on the river's bank, perform *ācamana* and express his *sañkalpa*⁶³. He should then formulate his request to the Lord with prayers and offer Him *arghya*⁶⁴. (171)

sañkalpa-mantra:

*kārttike 'haṁ kariṣyāmi prātaḥ-snānam janārdana
prīty-arthaṁ tava deveṣa dāmodara mayā saha*

O Janārdana, O Deveṣa, O Dāmodara, You are accompanied by Śrī Rādhikā. During this month of Kārtika I shall bathe early every morning for Your satisfaction⁶⁵. (172)

prārthanā-mantra:

*tava dhyānena deveṣa jale 'smin snātum udyataḥ
tvat-prasādāc ca me pāpam dāmodara vinaśyatu*

O Deveṣa, I'm about to bathe in this water, absorbed in meditation on You. O Dāmodara, may my sins be destroyed through Your mercy. (173)

arghya-mantra:

*vratinaḥ kārttike māsi snātasya vidhivan mama
dāmodara grhāñārghyam danujendra-nisūdāna
nitye naimittike kṛtsne kārttike pāpa-śoṣaṇe*

grhāṅārghyaṁ mayā dattaṁ rādhayā sahito hare

O Dāmodara, I'm bathing in the month of Kārtika in conformity to the rules, as I committed myself. O killer of demons, please accept this *arghya*.

In this month all activities, whether habitual or occasional, have the power to destroy sins. O Hari, O Rādhā, please accept this *arghya*. (174-175)

Then, after smearing the body with sesame and bathing according to etiquette while loudly chanting the Lord's names, one should perform his *sandhyopāsana*⁶⁶ and return home. There, after drawing a *svastika*⁶⁷ before the Deity, he should worship the Lord with Tulasī and flowers such as lotus, Mālatī⁶⁸ and Agastya. (176-177)

Every day one should hear *Bhāgavata-kathā* in a gathering of Vaiṣṇavas and regularly worship the Lord with ghee and sesame-oil lamps; particularly, he should offer foodstuffs, pay obeisances, and undertake vows, such as eating once a day, according to his best capacity. (176-179)

(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Other relevant activities are eating in silence, offering lamps to Tulasī, and offering gold, silver, lamps, gems, pearls, and fruits to Lord Dāmodara.

Moreover, *saṅkalpa* can alternatively be taken on the last *ekādaśī* or on the full moon day of Aśvini, or even on Tulā-sankranti, the day in which the sun enters Libra during Kārtika.

The performance of Kārtika *vratas* is best done in a holy place rather than at home. [Excerpts from verses 180-186]

To be avoided during Kārtika

O great sages, those who eat *rājamāṣa* and *niṣpāva* beans⁶⁹ during Kārtika will remain in hell until the time of dissolution. This applies also to those who do not abstain from *kaliḡa*⁷⁰, *paōola*⁷¹, eggplant, and *sandhita*⁷² items. (187-188)

Furthermore, during Kārtika the wise should especially abstain from others' food⁷³, others' beds, others' wives, and others' wealth. (190)

He who refrains from anointing his body, sleeping on a bed, consuming other people's food, and eating in bell metal vessels is indeed a full fledged *vratī*⁷⁴. (191)

The man who in this month avoids food meant for others earns the fruits of arduous penances, day after day. (187-192) (*Skanda Purāṇa*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Festivities during Kārtika

This last part of the chapter deals with specific duties to be discharged on particular days of the month. What follows is a complete list of these festivities with selected verses that describe related rituals and background. [Translator's note]

(DARK FORTNIGHT)

Kṛṣṇāṣṭami

O *brahmanas*, Rādhā-kuṇḁa, which is dear to Lord Hari, is situated at the feet of the charming Govardhana Hill. During Kārtika, the person who bathes there on the day of *Bahulāṣṭami*⁷⁵ becomes the Lord's dear devotee, because this act highly pleases Him. Of all the *gopēs*, Rādhā is undoubtedly Lord Viñēu's dearest, and this *kuōda* is as dear to Him as Rādhā Herself. (207-208)

(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Being highly pleased by Rādhā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave the sovereignty of Vṛndāvana to Her. Consequently She is Rādhā in Vṛndāvana, and elsewhere She is Devī.

By bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḁa on this *aṣṭamī* one pleases Janārdana as much as by worshipping Him on the day of Subodhanī-ekādaśī⁷⁶. (209-210)

(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā, at the conclusion of the narration about Rādhā)

Kṛṣṇa-trayodaśī

On the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight, at dusk, a *dīpa* should be kindled in Yama's honor outside the house, to prevent the possibility of an untimely death. (211)

The related *mantra*:

*mṛtyunā pāśa-daṇḍābhyāṃ kālāḥ śyāmalayā saha
trayodaśyāṃ dīpa-dānāt sūrya-jaḥ prīyatāmīti*

On this day of *trayodaśī*, may this *dīpa* please the son of the sun-god, Kāla⁷⁷, as well as his noose, his stick, death, and Syāmalā⁷⁸. (212)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

Kṛṣṇa-caturdaśī

On the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight those who fear hell should certainly bathe and fervently worship Dharmarāja. But bathing at times other than dawn will certainly cancel one year worth of pious activities. (213-214)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

By offering a *dīpa* on the evenings of *caturdaśī* and *amāvāsya* in the course of Kārtika a person is delivered from the darkness of Yama's path. (221)
(*Skanda Purāṇa*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Amāvāsya

On this day everyone, except for children and the diseased, should fast and worship Lakṣmī at the time of *pradoṣa*⁷⁹. O *brāhmaṇas*, at the time of *pradoṣa* one should arrange a string of *dīpas* and then awaken the sleeping Lakṣmī. (222-223)

The related mantra:
*tvaṃ jyotiḥ Śrī-raviś candro vidyut-sauvarṇa-tārakāḥ
sarveṣāṃ jyotiṣāṃ jyotir dīpa-jyotiḥ sthite namaḥ*

You are the light, You are the sun and the moon, You are lightning, You are gold, and You are the stars, You are the light of all luminous objects. I bow down to You, Who are present in the light of this *dīpa*.. (224)

O *brāhmaṇas*, ladies should wake Kamalā Devī⁸⁰ by reciting this *mantra* and offering *dēpas*, and only then have their meal. On this occasion, she who eats only after worshipping Lakṣmī at dusk will certainly be accompanied by her for the whole year. (225-226)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

(BRIGHT FORTNIGHT)

Śukla-pratīpat

81

After worshipping Govardhana in the early morning, one should engage in gambling⁸². Then he should adorn cows and oxen, along with carts and milking vessels, and honor them all⁸³. Vaiṣṇavas should worship Govardhana Hill, the best of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's servants, in the early morning of this *pratīpat*, and then remain awake throughout the night. (231-233)
(*Skanda Purāṇa*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

Rules for Govardhana-pūjā:

If *Govardhana-pūjā* is to be performed somewhere outside the area of Mathurā, then a hill should be built out of cowdung and worshipped as Girirāja. But, by circumambulating Govardhana and by offering direct *pūjā* to it in Mathurā, one reaches Lord Viṣṇu's abode and rejoices in His company. (248-249)

govardhana-pūjā mantra:
*govardhana dharādḥāra gokula-trāṇa-kāraka
viṣṇu-bāhu-kṛtocchrāya gavāṃ koṭi-prado bhava*

O Govardhana! O sustainer of Earth! O protector of cowherds! Lord Viṣṇu blessed you by lifting you with His hand. Please give us your mercy, in the form of millions of cows⁸⁴ (250)
(*Padma Purāṇa*, dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā)

This is the *go-pūjā mantra*:
lakṣmīr yā loka-pālānām dhenu-rūpeṇa saṁsthitā
ghṛtaṁ vahati yajñārthe yama-pāśaṁ vyapohatu
agrataḥ santu me gāvo gāvo me santu pṛṣṭhataḥ
gāvo me pārsvataḥ santu gavāṁ madhye vasāmy aham

May Lakṣmī, who takes the form of a cow⁸⁵ among the protectors of this world and thus provides clarified butter for the sacrifice, free us from the fetters of death.

Let cows be before me, behind me, and at my sides. May I live amidst cows! (251-252)

Go-kṛīḍā (playing with the cows)

Cows and buffaloes should be provoked against each other and then let free to run here and there. Then the cowherds should attract them towards the bulls by calling and shouting back and forth, and let the cows and bulls play together. (253)

(*Skanda Purāṇa*, dialogue between Brahmā and Nārada)

The worship of Śrī Bali, King of the demons.

On the same *pratīpat*, at dusk, after painting a portrait of Śrī Bali with his wife, Vindhyāvalī, one should worship him, for he is the Lord's devotee. (256)

One should worship Bali, the King of the Daityas, after painting him in five colors, with a joyful expression, with two arms, fully decorated with ornaments such as earrings and helmet, in the company of Vindhyāvalī, and escorted by the demons Kuṣmāṇḍa, Maya, Jambhoru, and Mura. (257-258)
(*Skanda Purāṇa*)

Background of the pūjā

This great soul, Bali, gave his body in charity to Lord Viṣṇu in order to keep his word. But, alas, he was roughly treated and tied by Vāmana Deva; the wise Bali was bound by the Lord and brought to Patāla, but, although displeased and distressed, he did not disrespect the Lord and he totally relinquished his egotism. Then the Lord, highly pleased with Bali, said: "O king of demons! You shall obtain all the pious merits previously earned by those who give charity to non-*brāhmaṇas*, who perform *homa* without *mantras*, who recite *japa* with disturbed minds, and who, on the first lunar day of the bright fortnight of Kārtika, do not worship You." (259-261)
Therefore on *pratīpat* one should definitely worship this king of demons with joy, because this is the day in which the Lord granted His boon to Bali. This *pūjā* ought to be performed with fervor in the proximity of Lord Kṛṣṇa⁸⁶. (259-262)
(*Padma Purāṇa*)

Rules for Bali-pūjā:

A person, assisted by the whole family, including one's mother, brothers, relatives and friends, should worship Bali in a wide space within the house compound. He should offer him many items such as sandal-paste, lilies and lotuses, eatables, *akṣata*⁸⁷, and *pūpakas*⁸⁸ dipped in jaggery. (263-264)
(*Skanda Purāṇa*)

Pūjā-mantra:
bali-rāja namas tubhyaṁ virocana-suta prabho
bhaviṣyendra surārāte pūjeyaṁ pratigrhyatām

O King Bali, I bow down to You. O son of Virocana, O master, O future Indra, O enemy of the demigods, kindly accept this worship. (265)

dīpotsavair janita-sarva-jana-pramodaiḥ
kurvanti ye sumatayo balirāja-pūjām
dānopabhoga-sukha-vṛddhi-śatākulānām
nūnaṁ prayāti sakalāṁ pramudaiva varṣam

Wise persons who honor King Bali with this festival of lamps that cheers everyone will experience happiness and prosperity for hundred generations as a result, and they will obviously spend in full delight this whole year as well. (266)

Yama-(sukla)-dvitīyā

Yama should be worshipped at noon on the second day of bright fortnight; a person who bathes in the Yamunā on this occasion will never see *Yamaloka*. (268)

O *brāhmaṇa*, on this day wise men should not eat at home but rather accept food affectionately cooked by their sisters, because food prepared by one's sister is highly nourishing. Gifts should be presented to one's sister according to rules, and all sisters should be honored adequately. In absence of direct sisters, one can honor step-sisters. This is the day on which Yamunā cooked for her brother, Yamarāja, with utmost affection. Therefore, eating from the hand of one's sister will yield great power and the most precious treasure⁸⁹ (268-269) (*Skanda Purāṇa* and *Padma Purāṇa*)

Suklāṣṭamī

The eighth day of the bright fortnight is also called Gopāṣṭamī by the wise. On this day Vāsudeva, who was previously known as *vatsa-pa*, received the appellation of *go-pa*⁹⁰. Whoever desires to fulfill his wishes should honor, feed, circumambulate, and serve cows on this occasion. (270-271) (*Padma Purāṇa* and *Kūrma Purāṇa*)

Prabodhanī (sukla)-ekādaśī

Just as in the occasion of Śayanī-ekādaśī⁹¹, on this Prabodhanī-ekādaśī⁹² also the great Milk Ocean festival⁹² should be organized, after which Çré Kāñṛea should be awakened and invited on the *ratha*⁹³. (273)

Necessity of Prabodhanī-vrata

Whatever piety one may have accumulated in life becomes worthless if this festivity of waking up the Lord is not properly honored. (274) (*Skanda Purāṇa*)

Virtues of Prabodhanī-vrata

O great sage, listen to the greatness of this Prabodhanī, which destroys sins, increase piety, and bestows *mukti*. (275) On this Earth, Bhāgīrathī Gaṅgā and all other holy places are powerless until the day of Lord Viṣṇu, Hari-bodhan⁹⁴, which erases all sins. Just by fasting on the day of Prabodhanī a person will earn the results of thousands of Vajapeya⁹⁵ sacrifices and hundreds of Aṇvamedha sacrifices. (276-278) (*Skanda Purāṇa*)

Rules to awaken the Lord

After carrying Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the bank of a lake and performing an opulent worship, as in the case of Śayanī-ekādaśī, a *sankalpa* should be expressed and the Lord should be awakened. (319)

sankalpa-mantra:
brahmendra-rudrāgni-kuvera-sūrya-somādibhir vandita-pāda-padma
budhyasva deveṣa jagan-nivāsa mantra-prabhāvena sukkena deva

O master of demigods, O shelter of the universe, Brahmā, Indra, Rudra, Agni, Kuvera, Sūrya, Soma, and the other devas all pray to Your lotus feet. O Lord, please wake up with ease upon hearing this *mantra*. (320)

iyam tu dvādaśī deva prabodhārtham vinirmitā
tvayaiva sarva-lokānām hitārtham śeṣa-śāyinā

O Lord, this Dvādaśī was created by You, Who rest on Śeṣa, for the very purpose of waking up, thus benefitting the whole universe. (321)

uttiṣṭhottiṣṭha govinda tyaja nidrām jagat-pate

Wake up, wake up, O Govinda! O Lord of the universe, please abandon Your sleep. (322)

Then the Lord, being awakened by the sound of bells, should be allowed to seat comfortably. At this point one should pray to Him with the following *mantra*: (327)

*so'sāv adabhra-karuṇo bhagavān vivṛddha-
prema-smitena nayanāmburuhaṁ vijṛmbhan
utthāya viśva-vijayāya ca no viśādaṁ
mādhvyā girāpanayatāt puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ*

May the all-merciful Lord, the Primeval Person, open His lotus eyes with a smile of intense love and conquer the world. May He bless me by driving away my sorrow with His sweet words. (328)
(*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 3.9.25)

After this prayer the Lord should be honored with *puṣpāñjali*⁹⁶, invited to stand according to etiquette, and worshipped with *arati*, following due execution of *nyāsa*⁹⁷. The ceremony should end with offerings of clothes, etc. (329)

Greatness of Ratha-yātrā

O Emperor, all the sites blessed by the glance of Lord Dāmodara in the course of the Ratha-yātrā which follows His awakening, should be considered equal to *svarga*. O leader of humanity, while pulling Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *ratha*, every step becomes as good as a Vedic sacrifice. Dog-eaters achieve the status of demigods when they watch Keśava on His *ratha*, even if they do it out of mere curiosity. (340-343)

Rules for Ratha-yātrā

Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be invited on the *ratha*, amidst chants of 'Jaya! Jaya!', and should be honored with opulent worship and *arati*. He should then be glorified with benedictory sentences such as: (367)

His lustrous countenance is dark like a blue lotus and glistens due to His resplendent earrings. His moon-like face is adorned by a *tilaka* made from sandalwood paste and *akṣata*. He playfully fills everyone with joy with His Ratha-yātrā, and His glance is filled with nectar. May Śrī Viṣṇu, in whose heart Lakṣmī Devī eternally resides, protect the whole universe. (368)
(*Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa*)

Then, reciting choice verses one should happily wear the Lord's sanctified garland. (372)

Virtues of wearing mahā-prasāda

For a person who devotionally accepts the garland of the all-auspicious Lord there is nothing inaccessible in this world or in the next. Such a garland bestows every pleasure and grants liberation. It should by all means be secured, because it will fulfill every desire. (373-374)

"Great souls like Prahlada are also pulling the *ratha*"—meditating in this way one should engage with other Vaiṣṇavas in pulling the *ratha* through the streets of the city. (375)

Necessity of attending Ratha-yātrā

Even dog-eaters achieve Lord Viṣṇu's association when they walk in front, behind, or on the sides of the *ratha*; on the other hand, even scholarly *brāhmanas* become dog-eaters if they neglect Lord Janārdana's Ratha-yātrā. (381-382)
(*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*)

Glories of remaining awake on the night of Prabodhanī-ekādaśī

The sins accumulated in thousands of previous births burn like a mass of cotton for someone who remains awake during Prabodhanī-ekādaśī. Even if guilty of the most heinous sins, such as killing *abrāhmaṇa*, O sage, a person shakes away his sins by remaining awake in Viṣṇu's honor throughout Prabodhanī-ekādaśī. All his mental, vocal, and physical sins will be washed away by Śrī Govinda. (388-390)

Results that are difficult to obtain even with great *yajñas*, such as *Aśvamedha*, effortlessly accrue to those who remain awake during Prabodhanī-ekādaśī. (391)

Rules of pārāṇa⁹⁸

On the twelfth day of the bright fortnight, one should break his fast and dedicate his difficult *vrata* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa; then he should worship Janārdana with devotion. In this way he will reach Viṣṇuloka. (411)

(*Padma Purāṇa, Kārtika-māhātmya*)

A person should end his *cāturmāsya vrata* on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight. After attending to his habitual duties in the early morning, he should feed *brāhmaṇas* to his best capacity and offer them presents proportional to the *vrata* that he performed, in order to counteract accidental flaws. Then he should break the fast with the items given up during *Cāturmāsya*. (412-414)

(*Mahābhārata*)

Vratas such as Bhīṣma-pāñcaka

If possible, one should undertake the Bhīṣma-pāñcaka *vrata* from the day of *sukla-ekādaśī*, for the pleasure of the Lord. Similarly he may take on the Dhātrī-*vrata* on the full moon day, or on the Navamī-*vrata* during *śukla-navamī*. If he is willing and capable to perform these and other difficult *vratas* such as the Paitāmaha-*vrata* and Māsopoṣaṇa-*vrata* he should study the details given in scriptures such as *Padma Purāṇa*. (434-436)